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“Gender Portrait” of the Composer Mykola Lysenko

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The aim of the article is to analyse the manifestations and features of the gender component in compositional, pedagogical, cultural and social activities, folklore studies, and performance, as well as in Mykola Lysenko's private life. *Results.* It is revealed that womanhood was a significant factor in shaping the psychology, worldview, and artistic universe of M. Lysenko. He, in turn, influenced/captivated women with musical talent and wholehearted dedication to the national cause. The article highlights the nature of the artist's relationship with his female family circle, acquaintances, female colleagues, co-authors, and performers, on the basis of which the following, thoroughly positive, gender paradigms are defined: filial and parental (more broadly — family) love, responsibility for female students and choristers, collegial and professional respect, appreciation of women's views, actions, and creative achievements, representation of the latter in his work, and respect for women's social and pedagogical efforts. *The scientific novelty* of the article lies in the first-ever research on musical and anthropological issues, dedicated to reconstructing the comprehensive gender portrait of a prominent cultural and historical figure who, along with national beliefs and artistic priorities, influenced society with his own example of cultural relations between genders. *Conclusions.* The gender discourse of Mykola Lysenko's life and work showed his exceptionally positive attitude towards the opposite sex, which manifested itself, on the one hand, in the absence of gender stereotypes, pejorative interpretation, or levelling, and on the other hand, in respect for women of different ages, social and professional status. This was facilitated by his thorough upbringing, European education, and the artist's individual psychological and mental qualities such as communication skills, friendliness, empathy, humanity, decency, nobility, and others.

Keywords: Mykola Lysenko; womanhood; gender portrait; Ukrainian musical culture; women writers; performance; folklore studies and pedagogy

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Introduction

Contemporary humanitarian studies are marked by a significant increase in interest in feminism and gender. Issues related to feminism, traditionally rooted in sociology and psychology, are increasingly penetrating other scientific fields, expanding the

space of meanings. For example, in political science research, feminism is considered as “an opinion that emerges from the experience of an individual woman who tries to resist male domination” (Kontsiiska, 2016, p. 4). In a broader sense, feminism can be interpreted as a set of women’s issues viewed from the perspectives of both women and men. One of its branches is gender theory, which “focuses more on relationships between women and men in society rather than on women’s issues themselves” (Chukhym, 2000, p. 24). Consequently, the history of gender studies examines these relationships within the context of phylogeny. Analysing them in artistic environments of the past and present expands the horizons of understanding, interpretation, and perspectives of gender discourse in Ukrainian culture.

Regarding the life and work of Mykola Lysenko (1842–1912), issues of feminism and gender are of direct interest, since he was a public person as an artist and cultural and public figure, and also had a complex personal life and a fairly large family. His “perceptual and conceptual world” (Sandra Bem) was composed, among other things, of cultural origins and mechanisms of gender relations that did not fit into established schemes or stereotypes. In this regard, he possessed flexible adaptive abilities due to his education, as well as personal qualities such as empathy, humanism, and nobility.

The time when Lysenko laid the foundations of national musical culture in extremely challenging historical conditions for Ukrainians coincided with the emergence of feminism in the Dnieper region, so his attitude towards women (loved ones, relatives, colleagues, students, performers, and co-performers, etc.¹) served as a significant factor in his personal influence on society, alongside the national idea he consistently embodied in his multifaceted activities. In this context, his creative work is also highly illustrative: these are pages of vocal music with female themes based on the words of poets and poetesses; operas and music-dramatic works to the libretto of female writers; adaptations of folk song recordings of female folklorists; compositions inspired by women or dedicated to them, etc.

Recent research and publications analysis. The grounds for the stated topic are found in the composer’s correspondence and memoirs about him, primarily written by women (Olena Pchilka, Valeriia O’Connor, Liudmyla Starytska-Cherniakhivska, Sofiiia Tobylevych, etc.). The recollections of Ostap, his son, and other male figures also shed light on this side of Lysenko’s “ego”. Dmytro Revutskyi dedicated a publication to Melaniia Zahorska, the colleague of Lysenko-folklorist. Hryhorii Kyselov and Liubomyra Yarosevych examined Lysenko’s relationship with Lesia Ukrainka; and Iryna Shchukina studied his relationship with Olena Pchilka. Lidiia Kornii analysed the features of “female” lyrics in M. Lysenko’s romances based on the words of Taras Shevchenko. Given Shevchenko’s undeniable authority for him, the poet’s influence on Lysenko’s understanding of the female soul and its artistic embodiment is unquestionable. Considering his close relations with Ivan Franko, it is possible to assume Lysenko’s acquaintance with Franko’s work *Woman’s Slavery in the Ruthenian Folk Songs*.

Danuta Bilavych wrote about the composer’s “remote” communication with Solomiia Krushelnyska. Roksana Skorulska was the first to address forgotten figures like Olha O’Connor-Lysenko and Olha Lypyska. Hanna Karas outlined the artist’s relation-

¹ Many women combined several of these socio-cultural roles.

ship with the female companions of his personal life. However, the complex of gender aspects related to the artist's phylogeny has not yet been the subject of special research.

Aim of the article

The aim of the article is to identify and generalise the paradigms of M. Lysenko's attitudes towards the opposite/other/second/beautiful gender for a more comprehensive characterisation of his extraordinary personality as an artist and individual, as a Ukrainian and European, based on his correspondence, creative works, memoirs, fiction, and scholarly works.

Main research material

The closest circle of women surrounding M. Lysenko since childhood was his family. Naturally, the first was his mother Olha Yeremiivna (maiden name Lutsenko), who instilled in her children the basics of good upbringing and good manners, taught them the French language. Recognising Mykola's musical abilities at an early age, she gave him his first piano lessons. She was a skilled pianist who eagerly performed her favourite sonatas by G. F. Handel and J. Field's variations on the theme of the opera *The White Lady*, both solo and in duet with her son, and "and in her old age she played wonderfully," as evidenced by her grandson Ostap Lysenko (1991, p. 42). However, the sprouts of national self-awareness in Mykola didn't originate from his mother, a noblewoman from an ancient Ukrainian family, who, according to Olena Pchilka, was "in the dark" during her time at the institute for noble maidens in St. Petersburg, so that "didn't speak Ukrainian her whole life" (Pchilka, 1913, p. 58), but from ordinary peasants, both men and women, who worked in the Lysenko family estates in Hrynky, Zhovnyyn, and village children.

"He treated his mother, as well as his father, with great respect and love, but firmly defended his Ukrainian sentiments in front of his mother" (Lysenko, 1968, p. 335). Tender feelings towards her are evident in all his letters. Her influence remained noticeable in the last years of the composer's life.

Mykola Lysenko's sister Sofiia married Mykhailo Starytskyi (their third cousin) when she was only 14 years old. At the age of 15, she gave birth to Mariia, and then three more daughters — Liudmyla, Olia, and Oksana². Sofiia had a delicate musical ear (Lysenko, 1968, p. 331), and attracted everyone with her cheerful kindness (Lysenko, 1968, p. 358). Lysenko loved her, as well as his nieces. According to the memoirs of L. Starytska-Cherniakhivska, he taught them piano playing, music theory (for which he translated textbooks into Ukrainian), and even dictated dictations — excerpts from I. Nechuy-Levytsky's novels (Starytska-Cherniakhivska, 2000, pp. 765–766). L. Starytska-Cherniakhivska collaborated with Lysenko as a performer (*Chornomortsi*)

² Mariia Starytska was an actress and a lecturer of the drama department at the Lysenko Music and Drama School. Liudmyla Starytska-Cherniakhivska and Oksana Steshenko became writers. Olia died at the age of 12.

and as a librettist (opera *Sappho*, the minute-opera *Nocturne*) and the author of the drama *Hetman Doroshenko*. “One of the musical numbers of the drama is the famous mournful ‘March of Doroshenko’, with which Ukrainian public bid farewell to the great musician in October 1912” (Khorunzhyi, 2004, p. 40). The nieces eagerly listened to Lysenko’s new works, but sometimes they “dared” to make their comments. However, he never got angry; on the contrary, when the remarks were valid, he agreed (Lysenko, 1968, pp. 320–321).

The twists and turns of the artist’s private life revealed his capacity for devoted love and his intention to become an exemplary family man. “Mykola Vitaliiiovych knew how to be gallant and polite with ladies; he was always considered a desirable ‘cavalier’” (Lysenko, 1968, p. 340). From two candidates for his hand and heart (Kateryna Hrevs and Olha O’Connor), he chose Olha, who stood out with her exceptional beauty and musicality. She had vocal abilities and played the piano. She became the unforgettable first performer of Oksana’s role at the premiere of *Christmas Night* in 1874, previously appearing in female roles in *Andrashiada* and *Chornomortsy*. The composer dedicated the courante written in Leipzig, *Pomalu, malu, bratyku hrai*, which later became No. 2 in the *Ukrainian Suite in the Form of the Ukrainian Dances Based on Folk Songs* (op. 2) for piano, to Olha³ even before their marriage.

In letters to his family, the genuine warmth of Lysenko’s soul is evident, starting from salutations: “sertsiu liubi matusichka, Papochka, Sokhviiko, y Mykhailo, i Andriiko” (Lysenko, 2004, p. 23) (Andrii is Mykola Lysenko’s younger brother, a physician — O. F.). He wrote “detailed letters” separately to his sister Sofiia, to other relatives such as his cousin O. O. Arshanevska, his aunt M. V. Buliubash, and of course, to Olha, during his first year at the conservatory abroad. After their marriage, Lysenko informed his relatives about their life together in Leipzig, about visiting concerts, museums, art galleries, and more. Touchingly, he cared for her health (she was delicate in health), supported her in learning the German language and vocal lessons.

Upon returning to Kyiv, the Lysenko family performed at concerts, including in Kremenchuk. The demanding audience “enthusiastically welcomed the Ukrainian concert performances”, seeing on the stage a beautiful couple “from good old noble families”, “with impeccable elegance and even unusual chic for the province” (Lysenko, 1968, p. 330). Lysenko performed his own piano compositions and folk songs in instrumental and vocal duet with Olha.

He had a good relationship with his mother-in-law. Mrs. O’Conner was democratic and humane. Villagers constantly came to her house in Mykolaivka, where Lysenko and his wife used to come in the summer, for advice or help (Lysenko, 1968, p. 341). The composer gifted her the first edition of *Music for Shevchenko’s Kobzar* with a gift inscription. He also became a sincere friend of Olha’s younger sister, Lora (Valeriia), who felt sympathy for him from an early age. At the age of 9, she received a letter from Lysenko that was “affectionate and friendly, as to a smart conscious girl, so that she would know she is Ukrainian, and would love Ukraine faithfully. That letter made a big impression on her because it was a letter to her, not just words” (Lysenko, 1968, p. 348). When Lora decided to write her first story and told Lysenko about it, he suggested showing it to

³ This is actually Lysenko’s first piano composition, if we don’t consider *Polka*, written at the age of 9.

Ivan Nechuy-Levytsky and later said that the writer praised her for a very good language (Lysenko, 1968, p. 368). Later, Valeriia created the libretto for the opera *Summer Night*, which Lysenko began writing in 1910 (it remained unfinished).

The Lysenko couple lived together for twelve years, however, “they did not have children, and Mykola Vitaliiiovych dreamed of having a family” (Lysenko, 1968, p. 328). When his wife found out about Lysenko’s close relationship with Olha Lypyska (who moved to Kyiv from Chernihiv and became Lysenko’s student, and later the mother of his children), she found another place to live. She did not agree to an official divorce but allowed Lysenko to legally formalise paternity and documents for children with his surname.

The composer’s three daughters — Kateryna, Halyna, and Mariana — together with their brothers enjoyed their parents’ love from an early age. The children were raised in a way that they would “understand them (their parents — O. F.) and could become their like-minded, faithful friends in every business in the future. Brought up in an atmosphere of sincerity, deep friendship, and most importantly equality, the children knew how to be grateful to their parents for never imposing any pressure upon them” (Lysenko, 1968, p. 399). At the same time, Lysenko was persistent in ensuring that his children received a good education, as it was a guarantee of self-sufficiency and independence. A peculiar aspect of the Russian empire, which unlike most European countries, remained an absolute monarchy until 1905 without the opportunity for public and political activity for both genders, was that the struggle for the right to education became practically the only possible form of women’s movement and the sphere of gaining rights (Kobchenko, 2017, p. 63).

A previously unpublished collection of letters to his daughters illustrated the domestic and parental concerns that fell on the composer’s shoulders after Olha’s death (Lysenko, 2004, p. 6). He wrote to Ivan Franko about his grief: “For everyone, the loss of a mother and a wife is a great family loss,” and he referred to his loss as “extraordinary” because Olha was “the sincerest companion and advisor” in all his social events and affairs, “supporter of... the best movements”, and he owed her the education of children in the national direction (Lysenko, 2004, p. 301). Letters to his daughter Mariana during her studies at the Moscow conservatory also show Lysenko as a caring grandfather to his grandson Ihorchyk.

A late but deeply passionate love blossomed in Lysenko for Inna Andrianopolska — his student from the Institute for Noble Maidens from 1900 to 1907 (later she lived in Romny, where she worked at a music school). It is clear from the addressee’s letters that he was aware of the age distance, the difficulties of live communication, but Inna became an obsession, the embodiment of femininity, which he highly valued. The beloved image brought both joy and torment, as Lysenko struggled with contradictions. On one hand, he expressed confidence in his good physical condition, clarity of thought, and a cheerful spirit, believing in the eternal law of life’s renewal. On the other hand, he understood that life “can firmly assert its iron rights” (Lysenko, 2004, p. 404).

Illustrative and positive in terms of “listening to the other side” were Lysenko’s suggestions for one-on-one conversations, in which he declared respect for Inna’s judgments, encouraged direct exchange of thoughts, and expressed surprise at her inability to resist the pressure of the surroundings following the “ordered – threatened – executed” algorithm (Lysenko, 2004, p. 445). This implies that he didn’t deny women the right to have a voice and even encouraged it.

To make his arguments more convincing, Lysenko used humour, resorting to borrowing and paraphrasing a folk song “I Had a Girl Named Orysia”: he titled it “To Inna,” subtitled it “N.B. Look for the melody in one of M. Lysenko’s collections of Ukrainian songs,” and then included two stanzas with a prepared dialogue (on girl’s part: “My dearest Mykolechko, don’t count on me, / because you will make my heart extremely angry...” and his response: “Forgive me, Innochka, my dear: (2) / I must live my life with you. (2) / I want to have you as my wife, / I want to gain paradise for all my life!...” (Lysenko, 2004, p. 404). The continuation is fantasised in an optimistic way: when the girl Inna changes her line “I don’t believe you, my friend” to “I believe you, my beloved friend,” the story will have its ending, just like in a fairy tale: “Then they will hug each other, kiss — and ‘get married’” (Lysenko, 2004, p. 404).

Noteworthy is Lysenko’s openness in a letter-story about his former women (at Inna’s request to know his “past and present”) (Lysenko, 2004, p. 431). Without hiding the delicate details or episodes, Lysenko describes a picture for Inna of the “beginning of Hymenaios,” that is, the marriage with Olha O’Conner, and subsequent “sweet” and tragic collisions of personal life, the transformation from a “barren fig tree” into a father of many children. It is noteworthy that he recognised Olha Lypska as a true heroine, because she had to endure a lot, feeling like an illegitimate wife. She emerged from that situation as a dignified person deeply respected by those around her.

While writing to Inna, Lysenko used numerous elaborate metaphors and epithets to express his passionate love, including “My Muse,” “the hearth of my poetic moods and inspirations.” This wasn’t an exaggeration, confirmed by very concrete expressions of great love, combined with their professional interests as educators, as well as Lysenko’s intentions for a national focus on children’s musical education: “I have composed a wonderful choir (soprano and alto) for your little ones. And when you want — let me know — I’ll send it to you⁴” (Lysenko, 2004, p. 429) (referring to Inna’s students from the music school). In the same letter, he informed her about the opening of the Ukrainian Club, inviting her to visit, as “quite a number of ladies have joined” (Lysenko, 2004, p. 429). In another letter, he described in detail the functioning of his Music and Drama School, where a significant contingent of female teachers in vocal and violin classes, as well as drama, were involved. The following fragment is very symptomatic: “Well, how else can I love and call you? Except as my mother. Mother, my Innochko! Who, besides a mother, can give so much tenderness, kindness, comfort!..” (Lysenko, 2004, p. 430). And this, next to the immeasurable love for the girl, is proof of undying filial love after his mother’s death when he was 66 years old.

The verbal component of Lysenko’s chamber and vocal lyrics with feminine motifs was poems mainly by Ukrainian writers, as well as Heinrich Heine’s poetry in the translations of Lesia Ukrainka and Maksym Stavynskyi. The colourful palette of romantic feelings for a woman is reflected in works based on the words of Oleksandr Oles (*Come, Come, and Love*). Soulful interpretations are given to love stories from the poetry of Lesia Ukrainka (*Eastern Melody, In the Sad Spring, Don’t Look at the Moon in Spring*), Odarka Romanova (*Where Are You?*), and Stepan Rudanskyi (*You’re Not Mine*), a poem about female misfortune by Yevhen Hrebinka (*No, Mother, You Cannot Love the Unloved*),

⁴ The Silent Evening for children’s or women’s choir accompanied by piano to the words of V. Samiilenko.

men's monologues about lost love (*On a Clear Night* by Oleksandr Konyskyi, *This is that path* by I. Franko), and the monologue-crying of faithful Yaroslavna from *The Tale of Ihor's Campaign* in the translation of M. Maksymovych.

The piano compositions *A Moment of Enchantment*, *The Longing and Waiting*, *Confession*, *Dreams (On Sweet Honey)*, and *Separation Waltz* were inspired by the feelings of a man in love. They are perceived as an artistic and figurative expression of a love experience by means of piano sounds programmed with titles. Lysenko's existential directive to love, be loved, and have offspring is entirely natural. It corresponds to Plato's interpretation of Eros by Volodymyr Yermolenko: Eros, in Plato's understanding, is not just... a biological instinct for procreation — there is something deep hidden in this instinct: the desire to overcome loneliness, to transfer one's life to another creation, the desire for immortality. Thus, he believed that through Eros, as "birth in beauty," each of us to some extent touches eternity (Yermolenko, 2023, p. 10).

Beauty, Love, Music, Family, Ukraine — all of these Lysenko's ideals were associated with women. This is confirmed by communication with the closest neighbours — Olena Pchilka and Lesia Ukrainka. As S. Tobilevych noted, no significant event in the Lysenko household occurred without the participation of Olena Pchilka (Lysenko, 1968, p. 392). M. Lysenko, a student, was a witness at the wedding of the Kosach, and Olha Kosach (before marriage Drahomanova) became Ostap Lysenko's godmother. "Kosach's son Mykola was the godson of the composer" (Shchukina, 2022, p. 352). Olena Pchilka organised Lysenko's anniversary concert at the Kyiv Opera Theatre in 1904, and joined the board of the Ukrainian Club together with Lysenko and Mariia Starytska. It was about Olena Pchilka that Dontsov wrote that this woman has the right to occupy one of the first places in the history of the struggle for Ukrainian identity. Yet, we often remember her as Lesia Ukrainka's mother or M. Drahomanov's sister. As for Lesia Ukrainka, we mostly recognise only the talent of a writer (Khoma, 2000, p. 22).

As a result of the close relationships between both women and Lysenko, we learn more about them as folklorists, thanks to whom the geography of his song collections was expanded, particularly with Volhynia examples. Along with collecting and recording, Lesia Ukrainka, not without Lysenko's influence, was also engaged in publishing folklore. In 1903, her collection of children's songs and games was released. It's known that Lesya also participated in organising children's operas of the composer in his residence, involving the efforts of both Lysenko's own children and his acquaintances. Lysenko spoke fondly of her: "Our Lesia," "Dear neighbour, beauty, the first princess of our childhood dreams and our first director" (Lysenko, 1991, p. 288). Inspired by Lesia Ukrainka's works, the composer wrote, among solo songs, the choir *Our Father Died* for the 27th anniversary of Taras Shevchenko's death.

Other writers of that time, whom Lysenko knew and respected, were Olha Kobylianska and Liubov Yanovska. For example, he characterised Kobylianska's *Tsarivna* as a "very good psychological study" (Lysenko, 2004, p. 267). The writer visited the composer during her trip to Kyiv and, influenced by his piano piece *Valse Mélancolique*, wrote a prose "fragment"-novella of the same name. She sent Lysenko a letter regarding the death of Olha Antonivna with condolences, which, according to him, "seemed to dilute the grief between relatives and close people" (Lysenko, 2004, p. 301). He collaborated with Yanovska in the musical and theatrical genre, promoted her works, and even suggested pieces to M. Starytskyi for theatrical productions. He composed the music for

her fairy-tale drama *The Witch*. He asked the “dear lady” not to stop writing things that are “interesting, beautiful, and useful,” especially for children’s reading and children’s theatre (Lysenko, 2004, p. 188).

One of the founders of the Ukrainian women’s movement, Sofia Rusova (née Lindfors) along with her sister, established the first kindergarten in Kyiv, where Lysenko’s *Chornomortsi* and *Christmas Night* were performed in their initial versions, primarily by amateurs. Rusova was involved in directing the production of *Christmas Night* at the Kyiv Municipal Theatre in 1874. At her wedding with Oleksandr Rusov, Mykola and Olha Lysenko stood as “father and svitylka” (Skorulska & Chuieva, 2015, p. 177), after which Lysenko played the First Rhapsody dedicated to her on a theme of the folk song “Golden Keys”. It was “the only but wonderful wedding gift” for a good pianist (Skorulska & Chuieva, 2015, p. 177), who “for the sake of her public work, refused to enter the St. Petersburg Conservatory” (Skorulska & Chuieva, 2015, p. 181). S. Rusova considered Lysenko a favourite of the ladies, someone who “expressed his gratitude with sincere expansiveness” (Rusova, 1928, p. 152) and noted his Europeanism.

The prominent actress Mariia Zankovetska (real surname Adasovska), who had good vocal abilities, performed the role of Tsvirkunka in Lysenko’s opera *Chornomortsi*. In his letters to her, he used phrases like “my precious heart” and “my beloved talentlessness” (the latter hints at her role in the drama *Talentless* by I. Karpenko-Kary (Lysenko, 2004, p. 195)), indicating Lysenko’s admiration for her acting. There’s a mention of Zankovetska and Sadovskiy’s excellent interpretation of Lysenko’s duet *When Two Are Parting* (Lysenko, 1968, pp. 416–417).

A close friend of Zankovetska, Starytskyi, and Olena Pchilka was the writer Dniprova Chayka (pseudonym of Liudmyla Berezhyna, later Vasylevska). Ostap Lysenko recalled his father’s fruitful partnership with her. She was not only the author of poems on which the composer based lyrical solos (including *I Believe in Beauty and Should Only Roses Blossom* dedicated to S. Krushelnytska, later followed by *The Rose of Jericho*), but also librettos of all his children’s operas. “In various years, Mykola Vitaliiiovych recorded numerous folk songs from her voice” (Lysenko, 1991, p. 291). She possessed great singing talent and performed folk songs accompanied by M. Lysenko at home concerts.

From Lysenko’s correspondence, one can infer respect for the wives of his outstanding addressees-writers: Panteleimon Kulish, Ivan Franko, Boris Hrinchenko, and Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky. These were not merely traditional exchanges of greetings and “bows”, the composer sometimes engaged in personal correspondence with these women, seeking their advice, thereby involving them in national and public affairs. He continued writing even after Kulish’s wife (Hanna Barvinok) and Hrinchenko’s wife (Mariia Hrinchenko) became widows. When communicating with Olha Franko, he allowed himself a comment driven by a high patriotic spirit and very relevant in our times: “... it’s not appropriate for Franko’s wife to write to me or any Ukrainophile in the moscow style. This is the influence of the pernicious russian civilisation’, which denationalises everything that is non-Russian. You might say, ‘I don’t know the language!’ You don’t have the right not to know it, living in Halychyna” (Lysenko, 2004, p. 179).

Information about Lysenko as a piano teacher at the Kyiv Institute for Noble Maidens also contributes to his “gender portrait”. Having mastered music theory and history with Lysenko’s help, the girls themselves attempted to create music. The patience of the teacher, who “always accepted the musical nonsense of the female ‘songwriters’

with an indulgent smile”, was surprising. “One of his students, thanks to his guidance, became a quite famous musician abroad⁵” (Lysenko, 1968, p. 459). This demonstrates the artist’s progressive views on women’s potential to become professional composers, which is quite logical given his high cultural level, European education, and worldview⁶.

Writer Natalena Koroleva, who studied at Lysenko’s institute, debunked the myths about him choosing the most beautiful/talented/hardworking girls. Once, when reproaching Natalena for being unprepared, he saw his vocal compositions on Taras Shevchenko’s words *Why Do I Have Brown Eyes* and *Oh, I Am Alone, Alone* in her folder. He liked it. At that moment, during a lecture, the melody to the words *A Star With the Moon* was born in the maestro’s imagination. Soon after, he brought the student a manuscript of a romance with a dedication to her, which was lost during the war years (Koroleva, 2020, p. 100). These and other memories of the writer were incorporated into the work *To the Teacher’s Grave. On the Occasion of the 20th Anniversary of His Death* (1932) and into the “Lysenko” section of the autobiographical story *Without Roots* (1936). The novel, among other things, depicts an episode when Lysenko caught the girls at a demonstration of Ukrainian folk dances, which greatly comforted him.

Many women collaborated with Lysenko “in the native field” of folklore, performance, and pedagogy. He recorded more than 70 songs from the folk singer Melaniia Zahorska (Skorulska & Chuieva, 2015, p. 67). D. Revutskyi (2003) wrote about her unique voice, with which she sang exclusively Ukrainian songs, which made her “one of the remarkable phenomena of Ukrainian life” (p. 49) of her time. The songs recorded from her were included by Lysenko in his third collection. He also collaborated with her as a concertmaster, accompanying Melaniia’s duet with her sister Olha in Chernihiv, when listeners were surprised by his finely selected accompaniment to the “inspired improvisation” of the singers (Revutskyi, 2003, p. 52).

Notable Lysenko’s performances with other performers. Singer Olena Petliash, the daughter of M. Sadovska, studied at his Music and Drama School (vocal class of O. Muraviova), and later in Rome. From Lysenko’s opera repertoire, she sang the roles of Oksana (*Christmas Night*) and Dido (*Aeneid*). In 1909, six gramophone records of her singing accompanied by M. Lysenko were recorded at the Extraphone company (Kozarenko, 2023, p. 106). In a letter to her, Lysenko expressed a heartfelt request to sing at least one number at the opening of the Ukrainian club (Lysenko, 2004, p. 479). On the same occasion, he asked the violinist and professor of his school, Olena Vonsovska⁷, to play with him and Mme Izdebska⁸ “some trio or quartet” (Lysenko, 2004, p. 455).

The distinguished singer Maria Litvinenko-Volgemut had an unforgettable meeting with the composer during the dress rehearsal of the opera *Drowned*. It was her first significant role in Sadovskiy’s troupe in Kyiv. For some reason, the artist “expected harsh criticism”, but instead, she heard these words: “Bravo, girl! This is exactly what I hoped to hear” (Lysenko, 1968, p. 715). Unfortunately, Lysenko did not live to see this premiere.

⁵ Surname is not specified.

⁶ Upon arriving in Germany, Lysenko noticed many girls who were also entering the conservatory. He attended a concert by Clara Schumann, a pianist and composer, who was the wife of Robert Schumann.

⁷ After Lysenko’s death, Vonsovska and M. Starytska jointly led the school.

⁸ The name is unknown. A cellist who taught at M. Lysenko’s School.

Lysenko did not personally meet with the famous singer S. Krushelnytska, although both wanted to. When she was working at the Warsaw Opera, Lysenko dedicated and sent her “a Ukrainian gift,” three previously unpublished solo compositions — the two mentioned above to the words of Dniprova Chaika and one to the words of I. Franko (*Do not Forget the Youthful Days*), as a “sign of high respect” for her “talent and artistic skill” (Lysenko, 2004, p. 285). Krushelnytska sent him a congratulatory telegram and valuable gifts for his 35th anniversary of artistic activity, which was celebrated in Lviv in 1903.

A fact from his conducting work can serve as a clear touch to Lysenko’s gender principles. When selecting singers for a choral tour of the cities of Poland and Russia in order to show the beauty of Ukrainian songs⁹, he invited the daughter of the priest Mykhailo Shcherbakivskiyi, Yevheniia, as a skilled musician with a beautiful voice, to complete the viola part. In doing so, he considered it necessary to vouch in a letter to the priest for “behaviour in the choir” regarding her: “The women’s choir will be completely separated from the men’s choir, and in my person, she will have a father who zealously protects her from everything possible; I guarantee that” (Lysenko, 2004, p. 321). To strengthen the point, he added that another guardian of the female “choral element” would be Yakiv Hulak-Artemovskiyi, known as “a man of high morality” (Lysenko, 2004, p. 321). Giving his consent in a reply letter, the touched priest thanked the artist for his tactful foresight. Lysenko’s female-friendly “philogynous masculinity” (C. Groes-Green) was complemented in this case by the function of protecting them from potential dangers.

Conclusions

Thus, the life and activities of M. Lysenko drew womanhood into its orbit as an integral component of his personal and surrounding worlds, as well as the world of art. Several gender paradigms can be distinguished in Lysenko’s interactions with women, including individual and mental (thoughts, intentions, actions, behaviour) closely intertwined with congenital and acquired traits due to noble origin and upbringing; domestic (family routines and celebrations); professional and creative (the inspiration for composition, sometimes fuelled by love and friendship, and declared in inscriptions; co-authorship; performing; folklore and pedagogical forms of cooperation), cultural and social (co-organisation of national and patriotic initiatives and events), protective (taking care of the health and safety of relatives and strangers). These manifested through various social and professional roles such as son, husband, brother, father, uncle, colleague, friend, artist (concertmaster, ensemble member, and conductor), composer, teacher, and head of an educational institution. Any role was accompanied by a national ethos, which helped to “Ukrainise” women or consolidate national feelings — through language, song, and music in general. Communication and correspondence served as tools for establishing the artist’s gender. The psychological backdrop of his gender portrait consisted of his extroversion, cordocentrism, openness to people, kindness, gallantry, sensitivity, integrity, and responsibility. The foundation for

⁹ This journey did not take place.

valuing women was formed by his European education, literary works of T. Shevchenko, I. Franko, Lesia Ukrainka, and other Ukrainian and foreign literary masters, as well as national folk songs, which he diligently studied.

Nowhere and never in M. Lysenko's actions was there even a hint of pejorative treatment of the other gender; he avoided gender stereotypes. The circle of women who responded with mutual sympathy and love and happily communicated with him was quite wide; among them were many outstanding and renowned female writers and musicians; not coincidentally, most of them were feminists. Therefore, the gender discourse of Lysenko's life and work, revealed through his relationships with women, showed him as one of the progressive individuals of his time. In this aspect, the artist can serve as an example for future generations.

The scientific novelty of the article lies in its comprehensive exploration of the gender portrait of a unique representative of Ukrainian musical art and national culture; the musical and anthropological multifaceted nature of the issue, which combines creativity, ideology, self-identification, and existential positions of the subject, gender, pedagogy, and upbringing, is presented.

Future research perspectives involve a deeper examination of multifaceted relationships with individual female personalities on M. Lysenko's life path, the analysis of his artistic interpretation of female images in opera works, and more.

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Мета статті — проаналізувати прояви й особливості гендерного складника в композиторській, педагогічній і культурно-громадській діяльності, фольклористиці, виконавстві, а також у приватному житті Миколи Лисенка. *Результати дослідження.* З'ясовано, що жіноцтво було вагомим чинником у формуванні психології, світогляду та мистецького універсуму М. Лисенка. Він, зі свого боку, впливав на / захоплював жінок музичним талантом і беззастережною відданістю національній справі. Висвітлено характер взаємин митця з родинним жіночим колом, низкою знайомих, співпрацівниць,

співавторок, виконавиць, на основі чого визначено такі, наскрізь позитивні, його гендерні парадигми: синівська та батьківська (ширше — родинна) любов, відповідальність за учениць і хористок, колегіально-професійна повага, цінування жіночих міркувань, дій і творчих досягнень, репрезентація останніх у власній творчості, шанування жіночих громадсько-суспільних і педагогічних зусиль. *Наукова новизна* статті полягає у вперше здійсненому дослідженні з музично-антропологічної проблематики, присвяченому реконструкції цілісного гендерного портрета видатної культурно-історичної постаті, яка, поряд із національними переконаннями та мистецькими пріоритетами, впливала на суспільство власним прикладом культурних взаємин між статями. *Висновки.* Гендерний дискурс життя й творчості Миколи Лисенка показав його виключно позитивне ставлення до протилежної статі, що проявилось, з одного боку, у відсутності гендерних стереотипів, пейоративного трактування чи нівеляції, а з іншого — в повазі до жінок різного віку, соціального стану, професійного статусу. Цьому сприяли ґрунтовне домашнє виховання, європейська освіта й індивідуальні психологічно-ментальні якості митця (комунікативність, доброзичливість, емпатія, гуманність, порядність, шляхетність та ін.).

Ключові слова: Микола Лисенко; жіноцтво; гендерний портрет; українська музична культура; літераторки; виконавство; фольклористика й педагогіка

