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Sociocultural Functions of Choral Art in Subcarpathian Ruthenia in the 1920s–1930s

Tetiana Rosul

*PhD in Art Studies, Associate Professor,
Uzhhorod National University, Uzhhorod, Ukraine,
ORCID ID: 0000-0001-5960-9812, tetiana.rosul@uzhnu.edu.ua*

The aim of the article is to identify the institutionalisation level of the musical culture of Subcarpathian Ruthenia during the interwar period, to reveal the sociocultural functions of choral music in the region, and to determine the index of society's involvement in choral singing. Research results indicate an increase in the institutionalisation level of the region's musical culture in the 1920s–1930s, involving broad segments of the population in choral performance. Active amateur and professional choral activities became indicators of growing national self-awareness and self-affirmation through various forms of civic and creative activities. Choral music became an effective means of patriotic education for the youth, the basis for the development of the region's musical education, and a polylogue of ethnic musical traditions. The scientific novelty lies in defining the basic sociocultural functions of the choral art of Subcarpathian Ruthenia during the interwar period. The criteria for systematisation are the social and aesthetic needs of the region's residents, the features of their national self-awareness, creative, and economic resources. Choral art is considered as an element of the general cultural process determined by social and historical events. Conclusions. The cultural life of Subcarpathian Ruthenia in the 1920s–1930s proves the multifunctionality of choral art. However, the sociocultural functions of choral music varied in intensity. The choir became a kind of sociocultural environment that served as a factor in attracting the population to spiritual and aesthetic values, fostering the creative realisation of individual moral potential, and representing the entire set of cultural activities of ethnic groups. Choral art emerged as a powerful ethno-creative force that used various forms of representing ethnic identity, demonstrating social aspirations, and preserving traditions.

Keywords: choir; music; sociocultural functions; repertoire; community; Subcarpathian Ruthenia

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Introduction

One of the oldest forms of musical expression accessible to all layers of society and capable of uniting masses based on aesthetic or social ideas is choral singing. As stated

by S. Sadovenko (2022), “choral art is a part of musical culture that transmits the value structure and constitutes the cultural core of society as a whole” (p. 48). Since choral creativity is inherently collective, the semantics of its thinking tends toward universally significant ideas, which determines the necessity of employing collective singing, primarily in religious practices or state events. The peculiarity of the choral performance tradition involves engaging a large audience, making a choral performance an event of significant importance. Obviously, the level of choral culture development, the vectors and dynamics of its evolution, organisational and institutional performance forms, the genre range of creativity, and the unique musical and auditory perceptions of performers and listeners serve as criteria for assessing the spirituality of the state, markers of nation-building, and the accumulation of socio-cultural experience. Thus, studying the features of choral art’s development makes it possible to understand the peculiarities of the social and aesthetic ideals of a certain historical period, as well as the worldview and ethos of that era.

Recent research and publication analysis. Music art, despite its aesthetic autonomy, serves several important functions in the life of society and the individual, which explains the ongoing interest in this phenomenon not only from musicologists but also from representatives of other fields of humanities such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, philosophy, cultural studies, and history. According to scholars of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, music is “a reflection of social structure... But it is more than just a space into which the social is projected... It is a way of subordinating the individual with an externally imposed order” (DeNora, 2003, p. 149). This idea is further developed by T. Adorno (1976), who states that “music is part of what we consider a great social document” (p. 44). Thus, the sociology of music forms a narrative that music is a constitutive element of social life, and studying the qualitative characteristics of the musical and cultural space and the types of participants in musical communication enables the understanding of models of social reality.

N. Synkevych (2014) systematised the theoretical and methodological principles of the complex of sociocultural functions of choral music, identifying the essential ones: “archetypal, ethno-consolidating, traditional-ritual, and church-ritual — those that inspired the cultural genesis of choral art” (p. 234). As the researcher notes, studying the inherent properties of the creative resources of choral culture from various regional schools will allow us to “prove the ontological integrity of Ukrainian choral art in the interactions of eras, in the interconnections of phenomena and personalities, amateurism and professionalism, past and present, which simultaneously provide one of the time-tested pointers for the future” (Synkevych, 2014, p. 234).

Choral art plays a foundational role in the evolution of Ukrainian musical culture; therefore, this issue continually generates scholarly interest, primarily among musicologists. For example, in their works, domestic researchers O. Bench-Shokalo (2002) and I. Bermes (2013) analyse the special features of Ukrainian choral centres’ activities, determine the role of leading conductors in the development of choral work, reveal the importance of choirs in the process of national self-identification, and characterise certain functions of choral activities. Numerous thesis studies are focused on analysing choral life in different regions of Ukraine: N. Kryzhanovska — Mykolaiv Oblast, L. Moroz — Halychyna, I. Bermes — Drohobych region, P. Shymanskyi — Volyn Oblast, and others. The musical life of the Transcarpathia region is covered in T. Rosul’s (2002)

research, which devotes significant attention to the activities of professional and amateur choral ensembles and the analysis of the choral heritage of local composers from the first half of the 20th century. However, the issue of defining the sociocultural functions of choral art in the region has not been the subject of special attention, which makes the chosen research topic relevant.

Aim of the article

The aim of the article is to determine the institutionalisation level of the musical culture of Transcarpathia during the interwar period, identify the sociocultural functions of choral music in the region, and define the index of society's engagement in choral music performance.

Main research material

It's evident that the musical culture of the Transcarpathian region developed somewhat slower than in the capital, due to unfavourable socio-political circumstances, lack of professional personnel, insufficient concert venues, and educational institutions. Nevertheless, the change in political regimes was vividly reflected in the intensity of the region's musical life.

During the period when the region was part of Austria-Hungary, the musical needs of the local population were met by several choirs (mostly affiliated with churches), military brass and chamber orchestras, and occasional concert performances by artists from Budapest, Vienna, and Prague (Rosul, 2002, p. 39). As a result, music vividly demonstrated the patriarchal way of community life, providing mainly for the religious and entertainment needs of the community. The absence of state institutions ensuring the full functioning of music was not compensated by private initiatives, as they remained sporadic. The involvement of locals in musical activities was minimal, indicating the predominance of the ceremonial sociocultural function of music.

Qualitative changes in the socio-political and cultural life of Transcarpathia took place during the interwar period when the region became part of the Czechoslovak Republic under the name Autonomous Region of Subcarpathian Ruthenia. The democratic policies of T. Masaryk aimed to protect the national interests of all ethnic groups within the republic, which in turn led to an activation of socio-political life and cultural progress. All ethnic groups gained the right to establish cultural and community organisations, which they actively used. The structure of these societies involved the organisation of amateur choirs, instrumental ensembles, and theatrical groups. The most active among them were organisations such as Prosvita, O. Dukhnovych Society, Sokil, B. Smetana Society, Hudebni Sdružení, MOZAIK, Kobzar, Matica Slovenska, and Habimah. Their activities included organising musical performances, publishing folklore material, hosting anniversary evenings, and celebrating national holidays.

As official statistics from district public education councils indicate, there was a rather rapid growth in the number of various performing ensembles in the region. For instance, on the 10th anniversary of the Czechoslovak Republic, there were

112 Ruthenian (Ukrainian) choirs and 38 orchestras, 12 choirs, and 16 orchestras from the Czech and Slovak communities. Hungarians organised 37 choral groups and 4 orchestras. There were also 10 choirs and 9 orchestras of other ethnic groups ("Statisticheskii obzor", 1929, p. 6). The musical culture of Subcarpathian Ruthenia also benefited from the achievements of the Filarmoniiia choir, the Boian choir, regional and district teachers' choirs.

It is worth noting the increased level of institutionalisation of the region's musical culture during the interwar period. The state supported public initiatives to meet aesthetic needs, including musical ones, by officially approving various associations, societies, and educational unions. Thus, even within the framework of amateur music, choral ensembles gained the opportunity to form their own concert and touring strategies, repertoire plans, and address financial and publishing issues. Consequently, their activities became more systematic, diverse, and responsive to the audience's demands.

The basis of this process also became a well-organised system of music education. Singing lessons were considered mandatory in elementary schools and gymnasiums, with one hour dedicated to them weekly. Extracurricular activities included musical festivals and school performances. The curricula of the teacher seminaries provided for mandatory weekly music lessons in such disciplines as "Music", "Singing", and "Church Singing" (Voloshyn, 1929, p. 151). The teacher seminaries involved professional musicians who significantly improved the level of musical and aesthetic education of the seminarians (O. Prykhodko, M. Roshchakhivskiy, V. Romishovska, Yu. Kostiuk, etc.) in the field of music education. All seminarians took part in the school choir, learned conducting techniques, which allowed graduates to organise church and amateur choirs, and even orchestras in their localities.

To provide training for the local intelligentsia interested in singing in choirs, some societies and reading groups organised several month-long courses in choral singing, music theory, and solfeggio. Similar tasks were solved by courses in theatre disciplines, which offered students lessons in voice training and stage skills.

According to P. Myloslavskiy (1942), a direct participant of the choral movement in Subcarpathian Ruthenia: "The village choir became the main centre of culture, which through song brought the light of enlightenment, gathered creative youth around it, and supported their cultural aspirations" (p. 59). Thus, the index of involvement of the broad masses in choral art has increased significantly.

The constant increase in interest in choral art became an indicator of the growth of national self-awareness, which entails not only the realisation and assessment of oneself as a bearer of national values but also self-affirmation through various forms of civic activities. Collective choral music, by uniting performers in the musical interpretation of folk samples or national musical classics, became an effective means of bringing together like-minded individuals, patriotic education of youth, and a stimulus for unity in pursuit of civic ideals. As P. Yatsko (1926), a participant of the First Congress of Ruthenian National Choirs of Subcarpathian Ruthenia, wrote on 13 June 1926: "Until recently, the Ruthenians near the Beskids did not know how to sing about the people's struggle, about freedom, about the joy of victory and the sadness and grief of the defeated. But such songs have already been born in our country under the pressure of recent events. The more recent history of our people has united the songs of isolated individuals into powerful national chants. 'Oh, the Red Viburnum in the Meadow'

is sung from the Bila Tysa to the Synii Don, consolidating the sense of national unity of all Ruthenian-Ukrainians. Our souls are filled with pride as we listen to these new national songs; our youth, under their influence, is brought up to love truth and freedom, swearing to dedicate all their best abilities to the native land, to the native people” (p. 11).

In this context, it is worth emphasising the quality of the choir repertoire, which was primarily shaped on the basis of ethno-national priorities. Thus, the basis of the concert programmes of the Ukrainian ensembles were arrangements of folk songs and original works by M. Leontovych, I. Vorobkevych, M. Lysenko, K. Stetsenko, M. Zavadskyi, and M. Roshchakhivskyi. The repertoire of the choirs of the Hudebni Sdruženi and Matica Slovenska societies, in addition to folk material, included scenes from operas by B. Smetana, A. Dvořák, V. Hřímálý, cantatas and choirs by Czech composers Z. Fibich, L. Janáček, V. Tomášek, and J. Křička. In other words, through music, both choristers and the audience got to know their own culture more deeply and contributed to its popularisation.

One of the significant sociocultural functions of choral art became communicative, as the joint performance act served as a factor of active interaction between artists and listeners, institutions, ethnic groups, different genders, and generations. Devoid of status and professional obstacles, equal and harmonious in joint music making, the choir participants highly valued the opportunity to achieve higher intellectual and spiritual understanding through music.

The communicative function of choral art emerged in a dialogical aspect on various levels: the connection between musical cultures of the past and the present; the dialogue between secular and spiritual music, folklore and academic traditions; the interrelation of urban and rural cultures; the polylogue of different ethnic musical cultures. Illustrative of the latter is the systematic organisation of joint concerts involving choir ensembles such as Matica Slovenska, Sokola, Ruthenian Choir of the Prosvita Society, and others. These facts indicate that there was a process of understanding the “other” culture through one’s “own,” through interpretation and adaptation of these cultures to one another. Music became an expression of the worldview of “self” and “other,” a way to share the experience of relations with the world, resulting in personal emotions being mediated by the collective experience of musical expression.

Choral art also became a means of artistic perception of the surrounding world, a tool for the spiritual and moral enrichment of the individual and society. Thanks to the emotional colouring of musical information, cognitive capabilities expand, awareness of the richness of the world is activated, making musical performance invaluable in discovering new ways of mastering the values of existence and developing the need for dialogue with it. In this way, the axiological and aesthetic functions of choral art are actualised, aimed at shaping value orientations, ideals, and cultivating aesthetic taste.

Closely linked to the aforementioned functions is the educational function of choral art. Music commissions of social and cultural societies and their choirs filled gaps in the general and particularly musical education of the locals. In the interwar period, cycles of musical and educational lectures and anniversary events were initiated. For instance, in the 1920s and 1930s, lecture-concerts were organised in the largest cities of the region to commemorate the anniversaries of D. Bortniansky, W. A. Mozart, L. Beethoven, F. Schubert, F. Liszt, M. Lysenko, T. Shevchenko, and others. Olympiads,

reviews, decades, and choral music festivals were systematically practiced, which provided for the director's search in the field of elevating the concert life to a qualitatively new level.

Mass media, particularly radio broadcasting, provided significant assistance in the educational activities of choirs. Starting from 1927, a radio station operated in Košice, offering listeners informational and concert programmes. Since 1931, it regularly conducted live broadcasts from Uzhhorod (Rudlovchak, 1984, p. 32). The use of the Uzhhorod branch created the need to involve local performers in broadcasts. Radio lectures and concerts resonated greatly among listeners, serving as an essential source of information about a range of provincial choirs, their repertoire, and the performing style of each ensemble.

Printed periodicals also contributed to the popularisation of choral art. Although there were no specialised music publications in the region, each magazine featured announcements of concerts and festive events, published articles of a scientific and popular nature about prominent conductors, composers, performers, and included folklore materials.

Regarding the educational aspect, the stimulating function is relevant, as it inspired the composition of music specifically for choir ensembles that were connected to local traditions and themes. This impetus contributed to the development of regional compositional creativity, which evolved in two directions: the first being sacred music and the second involving the creation of choral arrangements of folk songs or the composition of fantasies, suites, paraphrases, etc., based on folkloric models. These works were accessible to a wide audience while providing a unique and colourful character that was typical of the multi-ethnic region. Thus, emerged arrangements of folk melodies by I. Bokshai, P. Myloslavskiy, M. Roshchakhivskiy, liturgies by E. Talapkovych, I. Bokshai, E. Zheltvai, and O. Chuchka.

The needs of public and social life prompted composers and poets to create patriotic works of hymnic and heroic-patriotic character, which were performed at rallies, ceremonies, and concerts. Their functional purpose led to the self-restriction of authors in the choice of musical and expressive means, which turned out to be a simplification of the texture, harmonic language, and structure of works. Nevertheless, this music was accessible to the amateur level of performance and easily found an emotional response from both choristers and the audience. Examples of such works include "And So, My Brother" (music by I. Bokshai, lyrics by O. Dukhnovych), "Our Bells" (music by I. Bokshai, lyrics by O. Popovych), "Compete" (music by M. Roshchakhivskiy, lyrics by O. Dukhnovych).

Considering music as one of the key factors in shaping a person's character, artists attached great importance to music education and created vocal music for children, such as school songbooks and collections. Books for children's choirs were designed for the modest capabilities of school choir ensembles. Compilers of school songbooks created a repertoire based on folk song material, as it was most effective in shaping national self-consciousness. Children's choral collections also included works of heroic and patriotic content, which were relevant during the struggle for statehood. These features are characteristic of the collections like *Fun* by M. Roshchakhivskiy, *Choral Collection* by I. Bokshai, *21 Folk Songs in Three-Part Arrangement for School Choirs* by P. Shchurovska-Rosynevych, *Subcarpathian Songs for Choir* by O. Kizyma, *School Choir*

for *Upper Grades, Folk Class* by M. Hoier, *School Children's Choir* by H. Melnyk and P. Myhovka.

Auxiliary sociocultural functions of choral creativity are entertainment and ceremonial, which are inherent in the very nature of music as an art form. As part of entertainment events, choral concerts enriched the daily routine, while the musical accompaniment of religious services and state celebrations ensured the spiritual unity of the participants of the ceremony and raised its status.

Conclusions

Therefore, choral art is a reflection of the cultural policy of the state, which manifests itself in various forms of concert practice, musical infrastructure, genre priorities, formation of the sound ideal of the era, and so on. The conducted analysis confirms the widespread nature of the choral movement in Subcarpathian Ruthenia in the 1920s–1930s and its multifunctionality, which was manifested in educational, socialising, ethno-consolidating, communicative, cognitive, axiological, aesthetic, educational, stimulating, entertaining, and ceremonial functions. Depending on the features of social relations, ideology, and the socio-economic level of regional development, these functions were manifested to varying degrees and intensities. The analysis of the evolution of the region's choral life in the first half of the 20th century indicates that under the conditions of national oppression during the times of Austria-Hungary, music primarily served entertaining and ceremonial functions, while in the democratic regime, choral art emerged as a means of shaping national consciousness and consolidating the masses around significant ideas, as a tool for exploring the diversity of cultures, and as an indicator of achieving a higher social status. The choir became a unique sociocultural environment that served to familiarise the population with spiritual and aesthetic values, contributed to the creative realisation of the moral potential of the individual, and represented the entire set of cultural activities of ethnic groups. Choral art emerged as a powerful ethno-creative force that used various forms of representing ethnic identity, demonstrating social aspirations, and preserving traditions.

The scientific novelty lies in defining the basic sociocultural functions of the choral art of Subcarpathian Ruthenia during the interwar period based on the analysis of historical and source materials. The criteria for systematisation are the social and aesthetic needs of the region's residents, the features of their national self-awareness, creative, and economic resources. Choral art is considered as an element of the general cultural process determined by social and historical events

Prospects for further research are the need to compare the sociocultural functions of choral art with other performing spheres and determine the dynamics of these functions in connection with changes in the region's political and administrative structure.

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Соціокультурні функції хорового мистецтва на Підкарпатській Русі у 20–30-х рр. ХХ ст.

Тетяна Росул

Кандидатка мистецтвознавства, доцентка,
ДВНЗ «Ужгородський національний університет», Ужгород, Україна,
ORCID ID: 0000-0001-5960-9812, tetiana.rosul@uzhnu.edu.ua

Мета статті — виявити рівень інституалізації музичної культури Підкарпатської Русі міжвоєнного періоду, розкрити соціокультурні функції хорової музики регіону та

визначити індекс залучення суспільства до хорового музикування. *Результати дослідження.* Виявлено підвищення рівня інституалізації музичної культури регіону у 20–30-х рр. XX ст., залучення широких верств населення до хорового виконавства. Активна аматорська та професійна хорова діяльність стала показником зростання національної самосвідомості, самоствердження через різні форми громадянських і творчих активностей. Хорове музикування стало ефективним засобом патріотичного виховання молоді, підґрунтям розвитку музичної освіти краю, полілогу етнічних музичних традицій. *Наукова новизна* полягає в тому, що визначено базові соціокультурні функції хорового мистецтва Підкарпатської Русі міжвоєнного періоду. Критеріями систематизації постають суспільні й естетичні потреби мешканців краю, особливості їх національної самосвідомості, креативні й економічні ресурси. Хорове мистецтво розглядається як елемент загального культурного процесу, детермінованого суспільно-історичними подіями. *Висновки.* Культурне життя Підкарпатської Русі у 20–30-х рр. XX ст. засвідчує поліфункціональність хорового мистецтва. Водночас соціокультурні функції хорової музики виявлялися з різною мірою інтенсивності. Хор став своєрідним соціокультурним середовищем, яке слугувало чинником залучення населення до духовних та естетичних цінностей, сприяло творчій реалізації морального потенціалу особистості, репрезентувало всю сукупність культурної діяльності етносів. Хорове мистецтво постало як потужна етнокреативна сила, що використовувала різні форми репрезентації етнічної самобутності, демонстрації суспільних прагнень, збереження традицій.

Ключові слова: хор; музика; соціокультурні функції; репертуар; товариство; Підкарпатська Русь

