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## **GENRE REFERENCE POINTS OF MODERN CHOIR MUSIC IN THE CONTEXT OF STYLE IDEAS OF “NEW SIMPLICITY”**

*“New simplicity” as a stylistic trend and direction of composer’s work of the end of the late XX – first decades of the XXI century is quite vividly realized both in stylistic and genre manifestations. The genre aspect often appeals to typical forms of European musical art, which due to their popularity (in the sense of widespread in musical practice) provide “openness” of their semantic meanings for the modern listener. Despite the obvious relevance of such creative attitudes of composers for the modern stylistic context of European musical professionalism, understanding the genre aspect “simple” style of modern choral music does not so often become the object of Ukrainian musicology.*

*The purpose of the article is to determine the genre reference points of modern choral music that correspond to the stylistic ideas of the “new simplicity” as a leading trend in the composition of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In choral music of the late XX – first decades of the XXI century these stylistic ideas were embodied in the work of a wide range of composers from different countries, which indicates the main character of the “new simplicity” as a trend in music. The stylistic idea of “new simplicity” (the principle of “abandonment of the new”) leads the work of composers in the direction that revives the genre canons of European musical art and gives them new vitality. Classical genres of choral music, the origins of which are embedded in liturgical practice, are beginning to function as carriers of specific ideas relevant to modern person and the spiritual foundations of his life. This is the meaning of the classical genres of the Christian church tradition in the works of composers at the turn of the XX–XXI century centuries.*

*The main idea of “new simplicity” is defined, which is embodied in the general principle of “dissolution” of creative individualism in the canon of genre style. This defines the principle of “stylistic anonymity”, which characterizes the “new simplicity” and the current stage of development of European musical professionalism. It is noted that the idea of simplification of style in the music art at the turn of the XX–XXI century centuries naturally found its embodiment in the genre reference points of the “new simplicity”: they appealed to the established types of musical imagery and expressiveness, which evoke specific associations in the cultural memory of European person. Accordingly, choral works that reproduce Christian canonical genres (liturgy, requiem, mass, magnificat, etc.) in the modern compositional interpretation are very indicative.*

**Key words:** “New simplicity”, genre, style, individual style, stylistic idea, genre style, genre content.

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## **ЖАНРОВІ ОРІЄНТИРИ СУЧАСНОЇ ХОРОВОЇ МУЗИКИ В КОНТЕКСТІ СТИЛЬОВИХ ІДЕЙ «НОВОЇ ПРОСТОТИ»**

*«Нова простота» як стильова тенденція та напрям композиторської творчості кінця XX – початку XXI століття досить яскраво проявляється як у стильовому, так і в жанровому аспектах. Останній часто апелює до типових форм європейського музичного мистецтва, які через свою популярність (у сенсі поширеності в музичній практиці) забезпечують «відкритість» їхніх змістово-сміслових значень для сучасного слухача. Незважаючи на очевидну актуальність таких творчих настанов композиторів для сучасного стильового контексту європейського музичного професіоналізму, осмислення жанрового аспекту «простого» стилю сучасної хорової музики не так часто стає об’єктом українського музикознавства.*

*Мета статті полягає у визначенні тих жанрових орієнтирів сучасної хорової музики, що відповідають стильовим ідеям «нovoї простоти» як провідної тенденції композиторської творчості кінця XX – початку XXI століття. У хоровій музиці кінця XX – перших десятиліть XXI століття зазначені стильові ідеї втілені у творчості широкого кола композиторів різних країн, що свідчить про магістральний характер «нovoї*

*простоти» як тенденції музичного мистецтва. Сильова ідея «нової простоти» (принцип «відмови від нового») спрямовує творчість композиторів в те русло, що реанімує жанрові канони європейського музичного мистецтва і надає їм нових життєвих сил. Класичні жанри хорової музики, витoki яких закладені в літургійній практиці, починають функціонувати як носії конкретних ідей, актуальних для сучасної людини, і духовні основи її життя. Саме такого змісту набувають класичні жанри християнської церковної традиції у творчості композиторів на межі ХХ–ХХІ століть.*

*Визначено магістральну ідею «нової простоти», що втілюється в загальному принципі «розчинення» творчого індивідуалізму в каноні жанрового стилю. Цим визначається принцип «стилістичної анонімності», що характеризує «нову простоту» і сучасний етап розвитку європейського музичного професіоналізму. Відзначено, що ідея спрощення стилю в музичному мистецтві на межі ХХ–ХХІ століть закономірно втілена в жанрових орієнтирах «нової простоти»: вони апелювали до усталених типів музичної образності і виразності, які викликають у культурній пам'яті європейської людини конкретні асоціації. Отже, показовими є хорові твори, які відтворюють християнські канонічні жанри (літургія, реквієм, меса, магніфікат та інші) у сучасній композиторській інтерпретації.*

**Ключові слова:** «нова простота», жанр, стиль, індивідуальний стиль, стильова ідея, жанровий стиль, жанровий зміст.

**Formulation of the problem.** “New simplicity” as a stylistic trend and direction of composer’s work of the late XX – first decades of the XXI century is quite vividly realized both in stylistic and genre manifestations. The genre aspect often appeals to typical forms of European musical art, which due to their popularity (in the sense of widespread in musical practice) provide “openness” of their semantic meanings for the modern listener. It is natural to expand and deepen these meanings, which are formed as a result of the functioning of a genre type in a fundamentally different socio-cultural and musical-linguistic context, which does not coincide with the historically determined environment of its existence. Clarity and harmony as a stylistic characteristic of modern choral music is attractive for both performers and listeners due to the availability of “form and content”, which in the context of radical renewal of musical language by the academic avant-garde in the middle of the twentieth century serves as a kind of consolation for lost opportunities of aesthetic and ethical experience of music. Simplicity as a stylistic trend of choral creativity of modern composers, of course, follows from their genre reference point, which deny the creation of new choral music, as well as the invention of any individual technique of choral writing. In the historical past of Western European choral music they find more than enough reserves to actualize the spiritual meanings of human existence. And the main of these reserves are often liturgical genres, which naturally intersect with the simplicity of musical language due to its ontological essence, as once wrote P. Florensky: “The canonical form is a form of the greatest naturalness, and you can’t think of anything simpler, while deviations from the canonical forms are timid and artificial <...>” (Florensky, 2001: 561–562). One of the important aspects of the development of modern choral music is the relationship between the canon and the individual composer’s style. Accordingly, in this

regard choral works that reproduce canonical Christian genres (requiem, mass, magnificat, passions) in a modern composer’s interpretation are indicative.

Despite the obvious relevance of such creative attitudes of composers for the modern stylistic context of European musical professionalism, which is often assessed as “the end of composers’ time” (V. Martynov) or as the era of “new anonymity of the author” (V. Sylvestrov) – understanding the genre aspect “simple” style of modern choral music does not so often become the object of Ukrainian musicology.

**Research analysis.** Philosophical-aesthetic and musicological aspects of “simple” style as a symptomatic phenomenon of European composition at the junction of the XX–XXI centuries were considered by V. Martynov, V. Silvestrov, M. Katunyan, M. Buloshnikov, V. Grachev, M. Gaikovich, O. Tokun and N. Ruchkina. A wide range of problems related to genre and style reference point of modern choral music is a separate branch of modern Ukrainian musicology, which is represented by studies of Yu. Paisov, V. Tsenova, G. Grigorieva, I. Batyuk, O. Batovska, N. Gulyanitskaya, O. Zosim, E. Bondar, A. Kameneva and others. Some aspects of the choral style of contemporary British composers in relation to the stylistic ideas of the “new simplicity” were considered in the dissertation of Yu. Kuchurivsky (Kuchurivsky, 2019).

**The purpose of the article** is to determine the genre reference points of modern choral music that correspond to the stylistic ideas of the “new simplicity” as a leading trend in the composition of the late XX – first decades of the XXI century.

**Presenting main material.** The development of professional musical art from the middle of the twentieth century was marked by stylistic ideas of music by avant-garde composers, which indicated a fundamental break with the classical traditions of European musical art. This stylistic vector of the development

of composer's creativity was manifested by the first avant-garde in the frontier epoch of the end of the XIX – beginning of the XX century and embodied in the abstract, aggressively dissonant and mosaic sounds of “new music”. The consistent continuation of this attitude to the development of new horizons of musical language (both technological and semantic) and the creation of individual concepts of sound space in professional composition, eventually gave rise to the idea of communicative and aesthetic crisis, which became the object of art, philosophical and sociological reflections. The musicological assessment of this situation and the musical artifacts that represent it was reduced to a very symptomatic and concise conclusion: “Musical beauty was not just not heard – it was heard that it does not exist” (Kholopov, 2003).

What has music and musical expressiveness lost as a result of the extreme conceptualization of music as a special kind of art and musical language as a way of authorial expression in avant-garde creative experience? If we consider the deep meaning of the above statement of Yu. Kholopov (which, of course, is not absolute in its truth, but captures a significant vector of change of aesthetic paradigm), then first of all – the purity of its elements (melody, rhythm, harmony, etc.) and their semantic potential. What did the listener lose in this situation? The purity and absoluteness of the perception of music as a universal language system, the communicative function of which was provided by its main components (melody, rhythm, harmony, etc.). This system appealed to the musical experience of the European person, who was brought up on the harmonious (in the aesthetic sense) music of past eras and found himself in a crisis in the late twentieth century.

The ideas of the “new simplicity” proclaimed in the 1970s and 1980s in Western music academism, reflected the desire to return the lost expressive meanings and possibilities of musical language by “changing the intellectual and structural principle that determines the essence of composition to emotional”: such creative attitudes characteristic definition of this stylistic tendency (“new sincerity”), the essence of which was to rehabilitate the lyrical-confessional discourse of composer's work.

Characteristic features of the “new simplicity” as a direction of professional composition are the active appeal to the genre and style canons of past eras, the principle of simplification of musical language, the cultivation of melodic and harmonic formulas as the main elements of musical expression. Different composer's versions of the simplification of musical language present an original author's interpretation

of simplicity as an aesthetic and musical-lexical category, as an artistic meaning and qualitative characteristics of a musical text. In choral music of the late XX – first decades of the XXI century these stylistic ideas were embodied in the work of a wide range of composers from different countries, which indicates the main character of the “new simplicity” as a trend in musical art. Thus, the simplification of the choral style is indicative of the works of a prominent representative of modern musical minimalism V. Martynov (whose musical themes are based on textured and melodic-intonation models of medieval and classical-romantic music), sacred minimalism by A. Part and H. Guretsky, choral miniatures of the British composers J. Tavener and J. Rutter, choral opuses of representatives of Ukrainian music L. Dychko, V. Silvestrov, M. Shukh and V. Poleva, which genre indicators “duplicate” the Orthodox church-singing tradition (and Catholic also in the case of M. Shukh), large choral works by I. Alfeev, K. Jenkins, J. Ratter, and Tan Dun (which reproduce both the canonical liturgical and secular style of Christian liturgical genres, formed in the European compositional practice of the classical period and the twentieth century).

Of particular interest is the creative interpretation of stylistic ideas of the “new simplicity” by British composers, whose choral work is very little known in Ukraine. As Yu. Kuchurivsky rightly points out in his dissertation, “the names of the composers following B. Britten, who represent the new generation of the British school of composers, still remain in the shadow of their great predecessor. And this is quite understandable to the generally recognized status of the classic of the twentieth century, which is fixed by the name of B. Britten” (Kuchurivsky, 2019: 110). This fact is due to the very modest ideas of modern Ukrainian performers about the works of such authors as J. Rutter, who in the European music world has the recognition and status of the greatest Master of choral art of now days. The composer never correlated his work with the direction of “new simplicity”, but the genre reference points of his choral heritage and their stylistic embodiment indicate the fundamental correspondence of J. Rutter's creative attitudes to the stylistic characteristics of “simple” style in music.

E. Nazaikinsky defined the genre as “<...> an aggregate genetic structure, a kind of matrix, according to which this or that artistic whole is created” (Nazaikinsky, 2003: 94–95). The musicologist considered the genre as a typical model of a work that determines the structure of communication: “<...> the communicative context is not a once and for all given “scheme”, although there is a certain “backbone” of a communicative structure typical for the

genre, which is formed from the spatial conditions of music performance and a network of various relationships, which connect musicians and their listeners” (Nazaikinsky, 2003: 97). For the musical creativity of the second half of the twentieth century, the question of the relationship between the individual searches of the composer and traditional genre forms acquires particular relevance, because the general aesthetic principles inherent in the postmodern culture stimulate the fundamental freedom of the author. In addition, the composer can refer to various layers and elements of the musical heritage of past eras. In this regard, they talk about the principles of dialogue and synthesis, which determine the aesthetic idea of modern music. The creativity of composers has expanded its boundaries through a variety of aesthetic material, in addition, the idea of the impossibility of conveying the content of a musical text in words, since the specificity of musical ideas in the postmodern paradigm lies in the beauty of its sound forms, gained great importance. For each piece the composer creates his own canons, conditioned by his individual stylistic concept. The variety of creative searches of composers and the heterogeneity of genre-style processes allowed contemporary researchers to consider the music of the second half of the 20th century from the standpoint of neo-styles and polystylistic.

In this context, the stylistic ideas of “new simplicity” (the principle of “rejection of the new”) direct the work of composers in a different direction, which revives the genre canons of European musical art and gives them new vitality. The classical genres of choral music, the origins of which are laid in liturgical practice, begin to function as carriers of specific ideas that are relevant to modern man and the spiritual foundations of his life. This is the meaning that the classical genres of the Christian church tradition acquire in the work of composers at the turn of the XX–XXI centuries. J. Rutter in this regard is a very bright figure, as his work is fundamentally limited to choral genres that personify church and folklore traditions and sound simple and without technical sophistication in the composer’s interpretation, in the style of classical and romantic music.

The choral music of the British composer is widely represented by both large-scale works and miniatures, represented by Christmas motets, songs for double choir and four collections of “Christmas songs for choir”.

The main part of the choral works of the British composer are his author’s interpretations of canonical genres formed in the liturgical tradition of Western Christianity. J. Rutter’s address to the liturgical genres of the Catholic Church represents an individ-

ual interpretation of liturgical music, which is organically connected with the national origins of the musical style of works: almost all of J. Rutter’s works are intended for choirs and have their roots in the choral practice of the Anglican Church, which appears in his life from childhood. “I love the Anglican Church”, says the composer. “When I turn to a sacred text, I feel it with all my heart. But I am more of a supporter than a particular believer” (Macfarlane, 2016). A clear confirmation of this creative position are all his large choral works – “Gloria” (1974), “Requiem” (1985), “Magnificat” (1990) and “Children’s Mass” (2003), which are performed everywhere today.

J. Rutter is often criticized for the accessibility and simplicity of his melodic music, which “deprives him of a place in the pantheon of serious composers” (Macfarlane, 2013). “When I mentioned his name to the modernist composer and conductor Pierre Boulez in an interview a few years ago, the answer was just a snort”, said the critic (Macfarlane, 2013). These reproaches are associated with a characteristic feature of the composer’s style, which has its origins in the national choral culture and is associated with the tradition of amateur choral performance. “When you write for choirs, you usually write for amateurs”, says the composer, “so you need a certain simplicity, and I gladly accept that. Especially in Christmas music, which is designed for ordinary people. And here you leave your fashionable taste on the threshold, if you want to get something out of it” (White, 2011).

At the same time, there are not many who can deny that their best works, such as the Christmas song “What Sweeter Music”, which will be sung by numerous choirs around the world during the holiday season, show impeccable skill and a special melodic gift of J. Rutter. And his music touches people’s feelings in a way that most modern classical music doesn’t. And this can probably be explained by the religious sources of his work. But these qualities of J. Rutter’s choral music are due not only to its religious sources, but also to the ideological and stylistic reference points of European music academism at the junction of the XX–XXI centuries, which brought to life the phenomenon of “new simplicity” in professional composition.

One of the most famous choral works of J. Rutter “Magnificat” (1990) is quite indicative in terms of individual compositional understanding of the trend of “simplification” of musical art. Musicologist J. Bowden notes that Rutter’s work has several features in common with J. S. Bach’s “Magnificat”: both repeat the material of the first part in the last, use melodies of chorales, dedicate “more reflective poems” to the soloist and insert additional text related to Christ-

mas in the texts of the Catholic liturgical genre (Macfarlane, 2016). The monumentality of the vocal-choral score, in this regard, is of course correlated with the traditions of Latin liturgical choral music, which are present in the work of the British author both at the level of the textual basis of the “Magnificat” and at the level of principles of choral score.

Consider these two levels. The first part is based on the canonical textual basis traditional for the genre of the magnificat, connected with the theme of the Mother of God. In the second part of his work, the composer turns to a traditional English Christmas song. According to the author himself, he was inspired by the celebration of religious holidays in honor of the Virgin Mary in Latin American cultures, and therefore in addition to the liturgical Latin text, he chose a poem of the XV century, in which the Virgin Mary is compared to a rose. “Since the time of Bach”, says J. Rutter, “there have not been many musical works that would give an expanded understanding of the textual basis of Catholic worship. I had long wanted to write an extended magnificat, but did not know how to approach it until I found my starting point in connection with the text about the Virgin Mary. In countries such as Spain, Mexico and Puerto Rico, the Holydays of the Virgin is a joyous opportunity for people to go out to the streets and celebrate with singing, dancing and processions. These images of celebrating outdoors were, I think, somewhere in my head when I wrote, although I was not fully aware of this fact. But I realized that I was following Bach’s example, adding to the liturgical text a beautiful old English poem about a rose and a prayer to Saint Mary” (Macfarlane, 2016). In his work, the composer does not use the entire canonical text of the Catholic Magnificat, he chooses only some of its lines, which are associated with images of joyful praise of the name of the Almighty.

In addition, by removing the third line of the magnificat’s text, which refers to the humble image of the Virgin Mary, and replacing it with the text of an English Christmas song in the second part of his work (where the image of the Virgin Mary is compared to a beautiful rose), the composer changes the sacred meaning of the genre “unfolding” it in the direction of subjective-lyrical expression. Thus, the religious pathos of worship is “reduced” and the simplicity and accessibility of images of the poetic text and the expression of musical intonation in the best traditions of European music of the classical-romantic period come to the fore.

As for the vocal and choral style of “Magnificat”, the composer relies on the classical traditions of Western European choral writing, which devel-

oped in the context of church culture and became the basis for further professional composition. Note that the choral style of this work is based on the traditions of the Catholic liturgical genre: the monumental composition is dominated by the most common forms of early monodic chants of poems of the magnificat. In general, for J. Rutter’s choral score, the melody is extremely revealing, which gives the main lyrical tone of the musical expression and a special aesthetic appeal of the timbre palette of the choral sound. It should also be noted that in the case of J. Rutter’s “Magnificat” we are talking about the principle of inheriting the traditions of liturgical choral music and their creative rethinking in the context of modern musical culture and adaptation to modern performing practice. This is directly related to the activities of non-professional choirs, which is widely represented in J. Rutter (the composer actively collaborates with many amateur choirs – both in terms of leadership and in terms of creating a repertoire).

However, J. Rutter’s creative rethinking of genre traditions of choral music, as well as other representatives of the “simple” style, is associated with a more general principle of “dissolving” creative individualism in the canon of the genre style. This determines the principle of “stylistic anonymity”, which characterizes the “new simplicity” and the modern stage of development of European musical professionalism, which was designated by V. Martynov as “the end of the time of composers” (Martynov, 2002). “Before talking about the problem of the end of the time of composers, it is necessary to get rid of the very widespread misconception that the dominating factor in composer’s creativity and in composer’s production is the only and exhaustive realization of the possibilities of music. To do this, it is enough to remember that neither the music of the great cultures of the past, nor the music of traditional cultures of the present know the figure of the composer. There is also no place for the composer either in folklore or in liturgical singing systems – whether it be Gregorianism, Greek church chant or the Russian system of chants <...> with composer’s music there is a huge array of non-composer’s music”, – writes V. Martynov (Martynov, 2002: 3). This statement contains one of the main ideas of the “new simplicity” as a new musical thinking, which seeks to return the “right to vote” to music and the musical language at a new round of their evolution. At the same time, the musical genre as the source of typological forms of musical content and musical language occupies a central position, since it possesses a genetic memory and the ability to “respond” to the requests of each historical time. In this regard, liturgical genres have a special status

in the hierarchy of genre preferences of contemporary composers: they have the ability to actualize the fundamental problems of human life in an understandable, unified form that has been passed down from generation to generation.

**Conclusions.** Summarizing the arguments about the genre orientations of modern choral music in the context of stylistic ideas of the “new simplicity”, we can say that they demonstrate the principle of following the genre tradition of European musical art. Thus, in the choral work of J. Rutter organically intertwined different vocal and choral traditions, coming from both Catholic and Anglican liturgical music. In this context, it is noteworthy that Christmas songs and hymns, which are the most revealing genres for the English choral tradition and the simplest in their stylistic manifestations, are often defined as the composer’s main specialization.

A certain type of creative attitude of composers is clearly marked, which determined the genre and style specifics of choral works of outstanding masters of

modern music: composers follow the path of “rejection of novelty”, the musical language of their works is based on the ontological foundations of the liturgical genre and the style of choral music of the classical era. Therefore, we are talking about the semantic “re-intonation” of the canonical genre model “from church music to spiritual music”, which is addressed to the subjective-lyrical experience of sacred existence. The idea of simplifying the style in musical art at the turn of the XX–XXI centuries naturally found its embodiment in the genre reference points of the “new simplicity”: they appealed to the established types of musical imagery and expressiveness, which evoke specific associations in the cultural memory of European people. This makes it possible to “simplify” the process of musical communication, since the figure of the composer becomes less important than in the great era of individual styles in European professional music from the XVII century and the listener’s perception is not complicated by the composer’s concept of genre content and its musical equivalent.

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