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TRADITION, TRANSFORMATION AND INNOVATION IN BANDURA PLAYING IN THE UKRAINIAN DIASPORA OF AUSTRALIA

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Abstract

In the post WWII years, the isolated Ukrainian Diaspora population in Australia preserved a type of Ukrainian folk instrument known as the Kharkiv bandura, the method of playing, its repertoire and technique well into the late 1980's. During this period the style underwent some transformation and innovation that shed light onto the history of the bandura and demonstrates the process of transformation that ethnic musical culture undergoes when isolated. It also demonstrates the process of innovation.

The aim of the study is to focus on bandura tradition, transformations and innovations in the performance practice of bandurists in the Ukrainian Diaspora living in Australia; to observe those aspects of the tradition that were retained, and those performance practices that changed, and the differentiation of this phenomena in comparison to its original counterpart in Ukraine.

The methodology of the study is grounded in historic, systemic, sociological and cultural approach and related methods of scientific study, in particular, a historic-chronological analysis of bandura playing techniques in Ukraine, in particular, the method of systematic classification and complex analysis that performance practice that has taken place in Ukrainian culture. The study and analysis is directed toward the Kharkiv bandura, the technique and repertoire of Hnat Khotkevych, his students and the followers of his philosophy toward the bandura, focusing particularly on H. Bazhul and his student P. Deriashny.

The materials used in the preparation of this study include books and articles focusing on the bandura, and specifically about H. Bazhul and the Kharkiv-style bandura in Australia. Separate conclusions and generalizations were made on the basis of personal interaction with the informants.

The scientific **novelty** of the work is the introduction into scientific circulation of an organological and ergological analysis of the bandura players activities of the Kharkiv technique in Australia, the tradition, systematization of the various adaptations, and the development of independent innovations in the performance practice on this traditional Ukrainian folk instruments.

Keywords: Bandura; Kharkiv bandura; Ukrainian Diaspora; Australia; innovation; tradition; Khotkevych

Introduction

In the aftermath of WWII a large number of citizens from Eastern Europe found them displaced and despite attempts to repatriate them back to their home countries, many chose not to be return. Some of these displaced persons chose to settle in Australia.

Australia in the post WWII era was sparsely settled and industrially little developed country, far away from major cultural and industrial centers. Ukrainians who found themselves in Australia were separated not only from their home country but also from other Ukrainians who had settled in other countries.

In the new country the Diaspora population gathered together to form communities: setting up community halls, churches, schools, organizations and artistic groups to entertain its members. Those that had emigrated from the home country who had some knowledge of the performing arts were often sort after and were encouraged to share their knowledge.

As a result, some aspects of Ukrainian folk culture were established quite well whereas others were neglected. In the different conditions of a strange continent the art forms that found favor often underwent changes due to various factors such as access to traditional materials, or the limited knowledge of informants and their technical skills.

The purpose of the article

The aim of the article is to focus on bandura tradition, transformations and innovations in the performance practice of bandurists in the Ukrainian Diaspora living in Australia; to observe those aspects of the tradition that were retained, and those performance practices that changed, and the differentiation of this phenomena in comparison to its original counterpart in Ukraine.

Presentation of the main material

The bandura, a multi-stringed Ukrainian folk instrument, was brought to Australia in 1948 and on this continent the instrument underwent a variety of transformations and some innovations.

The bandura is a multi-stringed folk instrument that was before the Revolution peculiar to a specific area of Ukraine, traditionally Left bank Ukraine. In the 20th century it became to spread in popularity from rural to urban centers initially throughout Eastern Ukraine and the Western. At the turn of the century there were only a small number of traditional bandurists who played primarily in rural settings and who were traditionally blind. The importance of the instrument grew and this can be seen by the fact that the most important literary work in Ukrainian was a book of poems called "the Kobzar" by Taras Shevchenko. The title for the collection was the terms of the Ukrainian bards who played the bandura.

In the period between the wars the bandura became a popular instrument among the folk particularly young students with hundreds of ensembles appearing throughout

Ukraine, however, in the late 30's with a change in direction regarding national politics bandurists were repressed in Soviet Ukraine, often being arrested, sent to exile or in some cases shot. The instrument was considered nationalistic and anti-proletarian.

In Australia a small number of emigrants had learned to play the bandura and these players were sought out by the Ukrainian communities to sing and perform at Community functions. In time, influenced by these performances of these performers at numerous community functions, other community members became interested in also learning to play the bandura.

Hryhory Bazhul, Fedir Deriashnyj, Pavlo Deineka, Pavlo Nosiara were in a short list of people who had previously learned to play the bandura (Bazhul, 1969).

The most prominent of these performers was Hryhory Bazhul, who had settled in Sydney. Bazhul had learned to play the bandura from the prominent Ukrainian writer, ethnographer and musician – Hnat Khotkevych in the early 30's. Khotkevych was one of the most prominent bandurists in Ukraine in the early 20th century. He had been very active in the bandura revival in Ukraine but had suffered during the Stalinist purges and was arrested and executed in 1938. Almost all of his students in Ukraine suffered a similar fate and as a result, the method of playing the bandura propagated by him and the unique repertoire he created disappeared in Ukraine (Dibrivny, 1989).

Interest in playing bandura in Australia grew, but the first problem that arose was where to get the instrument. The bandura is a uniquely Ukrainian folk instrument and was not available in music shops. Instruments had to be individually hand made, and although we had players, only one person had some idea regarding how to make the instrument. This was Fedir Deriashnyj who had made banduras in Ukraine and who settled in Newcastle, a few hours north of Sydney. Deriashnyj had some knowledge of making banduras having made a number in Ukraine and Germany, but these instruments were of a different type and style than the instruments Bazhul played. The instruments that he made had to be reimaged (Denysenko, 1970).

Whereas the traditional folk bandura in Ukraine at the beginning of the 20th century had wooden pegs and about 20-21 strings, and gut strings – by the 1930's the number of strings had expanded to 31 and the instrument to encompass four diatonic octaves had acquired metal tuning pegs and metal strings.

During WWII the number of strings on the instruments had continued to expand to 34 diatonically tuned strings (Honcharenko design). In Australia the first instruments made also had 34 strings but soon the size of the instruments continued to grow and to encompass 36 or 38 strings tuned chromatically through more than 5 full octaves.

In time, others began to make banduras such as Pavlo Diachenko who had been born in the Donbas region of Ukraine, and Estonian instrument maker Robert Vidikas, Bohdan Brakh, Mykhailo Dimitro, Peter Chochula. More specific information on aspects of instrument construction were obtained from New York from Myroslav Diakovsky, Munich – from Semen Lastovych and from Detroit – from the Honcharenko brothers (Bazhul, 1969).

Regarding bandura construction, a significant problem that was initially encountered was the availability of suitable materials. The most common type of timber in Australia is a eucalyptus, which is not used for making fine musical instrument. European wood was generally not available, and fine European materials and woods expensive and almost non-existent. In time experiments were made to find substitutes.

The body of banduras made in Ukraine tended to be made of a softer lighter material usually red willow or poplar. The willows in Australia were too porous and were not useful for musical instruments. In time bandura makers started using substitute timbers for the bodies of the instruments, such as Pacific Maple and She Oak.

The soundboards of musical instruments in Europe used types of pine and spruce with tight growth rings that are produced by the wide change in temperature between winter and summer and were common in the Northern Hemisphere. Such wood was not easily available in Australia. In time bandura makers began to seek a timber known as King William Pine from the southern part of Australia – Tasmania that in time became known as one of the finest materials for musical instruments in general.

The parts of the bandura that required hard wood – for the peg boxes and wrest planks, which traditionally used European Beech, an substitute Australian wood known as Black Bean began to be used (Mishalow, 2010).

There were significant difficulties in getting tuning pins of the right diameter. Some makers began overcome this problem by using piano pegs that were sawn down and made shorter. Others would rummage for tuning pins from broken zithers and autoharps that had been brought over from Europe.

There were also problems with obtaining tuning keys of the right size, which were not readily available and had to be specially made.

Once the body of the instrument was made, the instrument needed to be strung up. Instruments were strung up with a variety of metal guitar strings, however there was a difficulty in getting long bass strings which had to be specially wound by piano string makers. These handmade strings were quite expensive.

The craftsmen who made these first banduras were often capable woodworkers who could make an excellent table or lay a solid wooden floor, but who often lacked the finer skills and knowledge to craft a fine musical instrument. Nor did they have enough orders on which they could practice and develop these finer skills. In fact, an opposite process happened.

In order to make instruments capable of withstanding accidental bumps and falls, and also withstand warping, these instruments were often overbuilt with greater thicknesses than instruments made in Europe or North America. Sophisticated glues used for making musical instruments were not employed being replaced by glues that were readily available such standard table glue (PVA). Instead of having no or just one sound peg some instruments could have up to 9 sound posts to make the soundboard more stable, and although this made the instrument more stable it also had the effect of significantly dulling the tone (Mishalow, 2010).

In Ukraine and also in Europe, a mechanism was developed for the bandura in order to rapidly retune each of the strings. By twisting this metal dital, each string could be raised by a semitone. These mechanisms however, required precise manufacture and placement, which was difficult to do without access to milling machines. The ditals also needed to be regulated in order to accurately shorten the string by a semitone.

Attempts were made to make similar mechanisms but they were not accurate and were incapable of regulation. They did not accurately retune the string by a semitone. These mechanisms were also expensive and added a considerable amount to the cost of a bandura. In time, the preference turned to instruments with fewer mechanisms, only on

specific strings in the middle register. As time progressed the use of these mechanisms continued to be a problem and they were ultimately dropped altogether (Mishalow, 2010).

There were a number of methods or schools for playing the bandura that were established themselves in the early 20th century. The most prominent schools of playing were known as the Kyiv and later the Kharkiv styles. With the purges on Ukrainian culture of the 1930's, after WWII the Kyiv style was the only one that continued in widespread use. H. Bazhul had learned to play the bandura using what was called the Kharkiv technique on a diatonically tuned instrument, a technique or method that had disappeared in Ukraine. This style was the one that he taught and it survived in Australia (Mishalow, 2010).

The diatonic tuning used in the banduras made in Australia allowed the use of the Kharkiv technique that allowed the left hand to play on the treble strings. The Kyiv bandura with its additional chromatic strings does not allow this. The Kharkiv technique that Bazhul used relied on the left hand playing the melodic lines and the right hand the accompaniment, where as in Ukraine and North America, the opposite became standard. The continued use of the left hand meant that the left hand technique became well developed and continued to be developed in Australia.

Traditionally bandurists have used the rest stroke rather than pluck stroke to set the strings of the bandura into vibration. This was grounded in the traditional manner of playing used by the blind kobzars. It meant that after setting the string into motion, the fingertip would come to rest on the neighboring string.

In the late 1950's academically trained bandurists changed over to a plucking technique similar to that used by guitarists and harpists where the fingertips lifted away from the strings.

The bandurists in Australia continued to develop their playing technique based on the traditional rest stroke technique of playing and producing sound on their banduras (Dutchak, 2011).

In Ukraine in the 1970's bandurists changed over to prosthetic plastic nails, which were placed on four fingers of the right hand. Bandurists in Australia continued to use their natural nails occasionally using epoxy glue on the ends to strengthen them. This had an affect and influenced the sound produced.

The right hand was usually used in an accompaniment fashion, where the placement of the fingers within the hand was much wider than that used by bandurists in Ukraine who used the Kyiv technique. This meant that the thumb had more room to move and play independently in opposition to the 2-4 fingers of the right hand.

Initially the repertoire used and performed included standard Ukrainian folk songs and pieces that were popular among the Ukrainian population that lived in larger urban areas in Ukraine. The standard kobzar repertoire began to be neglected because it was based on laments with a sad component.

In the late 1960's and 1970's youth born in Australia in the Ukrainian Diaspora began to incorporate pieces that had an English text. Some of the most popular folk songs composed by singer songwriters from North America, England and Australia became popular and were incorporated in to the repertoire (Bob Dylan, Peter, Paul and Mary, Pete Seeger etc).

These new songs were introduced by Peter Deriashnyj who incorporated many devices from the playing of the folk guitar such as Travis picking on the bandura. These songs left a significant impact on the listening public, particularly the youth.

In time, Deriashny began to compose his own songs to Ukrainian texts by Diaspora poets, which incorporated these accompaniment devices, which were common in North American folk music singer songwriter style. An LP record was produced which had significant popularity (Dutchak, 2001).

This island of bandura activity came to an end in the late 1980's. One of reasons was the availability of cheaper and higher quality serially made banduras from Ukraine. These instruments were quite cheap and had a professional finish, however they were not designed for the Kharkiv bandura playing style and as a result the number of bandurists playing in the Kharkiv style fell considerably and suddenly. The new instruments from Ukraine weighed less and were louder and easier to play. Without access to the Kharkiv style also meant that all the accompaniment devices that allowed the bandura to be used for playing North American folk music could no longer be used or developed.

Conclusion

The preservation of traditional cultural artifacts has taken place in numerous isolated communities. In isolated Ukrainian Diaspora population in Australia the Kharkiv bandura, its method of playing and its repertoire survived well into the late 1980's. The style however underwent some transformation and innovation, which reflected the environment in which this cultural artifact was used. These cultural remnants allow us to better understand and reconstruct unknown pages of the history of the bandura in Ukraine, and also demonstrate the process of transformation that traditional ethnic musical culture undergoes in isolated centers. It also demonstrates the introduction of innovation in the process of developing cultural artifacts.

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ТРАДИЦІЯ, ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЯ ТА ІННОВАЦІЯ В БАНДУРНМУ ВИКОНАВСТВІ УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ ДІАСПОРИ АВСТРАЛІЇ

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Анотація

У повоєнні роки Другої світової війни українська діаспора в Австралії зберегла харківську бандуру, спосіб гри, репертуар та техніку виконання до кінця 1980-х рр. У зазначений період на новому терені цей спосіб гри на бандурі зазнав низки трансформацій та нововведень. Традиція, яка збереглася, проливає світло на історію бандури та демонструє процес трансформації, що їх зазнає етнічна музична культура в ізольованих осередках, а також феномен інноваційного розвитку.

Мета дослідження полягає у виявленні закономірностей, передумов трансформації та інновації в грі на бандурі харківського типу в українській діаспорі Австралії.

Методологія дослідження побудована на історичному, системному, соціологічному та культурологічному підходах із залученням наукових досліджень у суміжних галузях музикознавства. Метод історично-хронологічного аналізу застосовується для виявлення особливостей традиційної гри на бандурі. Метод системної класифікації виконавської практики застосовується для порівняння збережених способів, що побутують в Україні, та виконавської практики в Австралії. Аналіз був сфокусований на харківську бандуру, техніку та репертуар Гната Хотеквича, його студентів та послідовників, його філософію відносно мистецтва гри на бандурі, з особливим акцентом на діяльність Г. Бажула та його студента П. Деряжного. Джерельну базу статті складають монографії, наукові статті та епістолярна спадщина традиційного та академічного виконання на бандурі, що розглядають бандурну діяльність Г. Бажула (харківський тип інструмента) в Австралії. Деякі висновки були зроблені на базі особистих спостережень автора та численних інтерв'ю з видатними представниками української діаспори Австралії.

Наукова новизна праці полягає у залученні до наукового обігу органологічного та ергологічного аналізу діяльності бандуристів, котрі застосовували харківський спосіб та техніку гри. Виявлено рівень збереження традиції, систематизовано еволюційні зміни способів гри, окреслено коло оригінальних прийомів гри, введених у виконавство у українській діаспорі Австралії.

Висновки. Збереження традиційних артефактів української культури відбувається у численних ізольованих громадах діаспори по всьому світу. В українській діаспорі в Австралії харківська бандура, виконавство на харківській бандурі, харківський спосіб гри та репертуар функціонували до кінця 1980-х. Однак, на Австралійському континенті, цей стиль зазнав певної трансформації та новаторства, що відображало середовище, в якому цей культурний артефакт використовувався. Ці культурні залишки дозволяють нам краще зрозуміти та реконструювати невідомі сторінки історії бандурного виконавства в Україні, а також демонструють процеси трансформації, які традиційна етнічна музична культура зазнає в ізольованих центрах. Дане дослідження демонструє механізми впровадження інновацій у процеси розвитку культурних артефактів, їх систематизацію і дозволяє здійснювати аналогічні розвідки у ізольованих культурних осередках інших країн світу.

Ключові слова: бандура; харківська бандура; українська діаспора; Австралія; інновація; традиція; Г. Хоткевич

ТРАДИЦИЯ, ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ И ИННОВАЦИЯ В БАНДУРНОМ ИСПОЛНИТЕЛЬСТВЕ УКРАИНСКОЙ ДИАСПОРЫ АВСТРАЛИИ

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Аннотация

В послевоенные годы Второй мировой войны, украинская диаспора в Австралии сохранила харьковскую бандуру, способ игры, репертуар и технику исполнения до конца 1980-х гг. В отмеченный период на новом поприще этот способ игры на бандуре испытал ряд трансформаций и нововведений. Традиция, которая сохранилась, проливает свет на историю бандуры и демонстрирует процесс трансформации, которой подвергается этническая музыкальная культура в изолированных сообществах, а также феномен инновационного развития.

Цель исследования заключается в выявлении закономерностей, предпосылок к трансформации и инновации в игре на бандуре харьковского типа в украинской диаспоре Австралии.

Методология исследования построена на историческом, системном, социологическом и культурологическом подходах с привлечением научных исследований в смежных отраслях музыковедения. Метод историко-хронологического анализа применяется для выявления особенностей традиционной игры на бандуре. Метод системной классификации исполнительской практики применяется для сравнения сохранившихся способов, которые бытуют в Украине, и исполнительской практики в Австралии. Анализ был сфокусирован на харьковской бандуре, технике и репертуаре Гната Хоткевича, его студентах и последователях, его философии относительно искусства игры на

бандуре, с особым акцентом на деятельности Г. Бажул и его студента П. Деряжного. Базу источников составляют монографии, научные статьи и эпистолярное наследие традиционного и академического исполнительства на бандуре, в которых изучается бандурная деятельность Г. Бажул (харьковский тип инструмента) в Австралии. Некоторые выводы были сделаны на базе личных наблюдений автора и многочисленных интервью с выдающимися представителями украинской диаспоры Австралии.

Научная новизна работы заключается в привлечении к научному обращению органо-логического и эрго-логического анализа деятельности бандуристов, которые применяли харьковский способ и технику игры. Выявлен уровень сохранения традиции, систематизированы эволюционные изменения способов игры, очерчен круг оригинальных приемов игры, введенных в исполнение в украинской диаспоре Австралии.

Выводы. Сохранение традиционных артефактов украинской культуры происходит в многочисленных изолированных общинах диаспоры по всему миру. В украинской диаспоре в Австралии харьковская бандура, исполнительство на харьковской бандуре, харьковский способ игры и репертуар функционировали до конца 1980-х. Однако, на Австралийском континенте, этот стиль претерпел определенную трансформацию и новаторства, что отражало среду, в которой этот культурный артефакт использовался. Эти культурные остатки позволяют нам лучше понять и реконструировать неизвестные страницы истории бандурного исполнительства в Украине, а также демонстрируют процессы трансформации, которые традиционная этническая музыкальная культура несет в изолированных центрах. Данное исследование демонстрирует механизмы внедрения инноваций в процессы развития культурных артефактов, их систематизацию и позволяет осуществлять аналогичные исследования в изолированных культурных центрах других стран мира.

Ключевые слова: бандура; харьковская бандура; украинская диаспора; Австралия; инновация; традиция; Г. Хоткевич

