

Importance of Music in the Development of National Identity: Representatives of Both Ukrainian and World Musical Trends

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to substantiate the role of music in the formation of national identity by analyzing examples from the Ukrainian and world musical tradition. The article discusses the importance of music as a carrier of historical memory, cultural codes and common values of the nation. The concepts of national identity in the scientific literature are analyzed, as well as the influence of folk, academic and popular music on its preservation and development. The study is based on the methods of comparative analysis, historical and critical approach, and intertextual analysis. This approach allows us to identify key patterns in the use of musical art to preserve and transform national identity. The study examines three types of music according to F. Tagg's classification: folk, academic, and popular music. Folk music, the original forms of which originated in the Neolithic era and were later passed down from generation to generation, became one of the foundations for the crystallization of a sense of national identity due to its ability to reflect feelings, emotions, experiences, and to refer to historical or everyday themes that evoke a similar emotional response from representatives of the national community. In the nineteenth century, romantic composers (F. Chopin, M. Lysenko, A. Dvořák, E. Grieg, J. Sibelius, etc.) turned to folk music, which contributed to the development of national schools of composition and the formation of a sense of national identity in Eastern Europe. In the XX-XXI centuries, the characteristic intonations, folk instruments and folk performance style arouse interest among representatives of modern music, including electronic music, which leads to the emergence of neofolklorism and its varieties, in particular folk electronics (works by A. Zagaykevych, bands Onuka, Go_A, etc.). These musical trends are gaining particular popularity in those countries that have been under occupation for a long time or are under threat of occupation in the future.

Keywords: musical culture, creativity, tradition

Introduction

In the era of globalization and the growing imperialist ambitions of certain countries, the problem of preserving national identity is especially relevant for peoples who have historically developed under occupation for a long time and therefore have not been able to form a sufficiently powerful layer of their own culture, in all its diversity of forms inherent in modernity.

Music occupies a rather important place in the structure of national identity, though not the main one. It is a kind of mirror that reflects the history, values, emotional and psychological portrait of the nation. Music has a profound impact on the formation of cultural identity, reflecting the values, history and aspirations of communities around the world. From traditional folk songs to contemporary genres, music serves as both a mirror and a catalyst for cultural change within the phenomenon of national identity [1, 2, 3, 4, 5].

Music is a space for both personal and collective identification, anchoring these identities to specific places, cities, and territories [3, p. 2]. Music has the power to create a sense of belonging to a particular culture and community, which is especially important in the context of globalization, when national traditions may be at risk of being forgotten or assimilated. This is especially true for peoples who have a strong musical tradition even despite long periods of occupation, such as Ukrainians. Identifying examples that demonstrate the significant potential of musical art in shaping national identity is the subject of this article.

Literature Review

An analysis of recent scholarly works shows that there is a continuing interest in the issue of national identity, with a significant number of works dealing with the role of various forms of art, literature, or art education in shaping or preserving national identity. Let's analyze a few recent articles in this area.

The monograph by Moreno-Luzón and Nagore-Ferrer [6] explores the role of music, in particular national anthems and songs, in shaping and maintaining national identity in different historical and geographical contexts. The authors consider anthems not just as artistic artifacts, but as important political and social instruments that can unite or divide a society.

In the work of Chinese researchers Fu and Tu [7], the subject of the study is the educational process and its role in shaping national identity. The researchers studied the impact of an 8-week course of national music lessons for students, but did not get the expected results - according to their conclusions, music is an effective tool for improving emotional well-being, but its role in shaping national identity is limited [7].

On the other hand, their compatriots Jian Sun and Jiangtao Han [8] have the opposite opinion – their research has shown that “ethnic music education plays a significant role in the construction of cultural identity, especially within multicultural contexts” [8, p. 112]. The authors note that the study of traditional practices can create tensions when traditional practices collide with globalized or westernized ideals [8, p. 105].

Researchers from Serbia [9], based on historical research in the Serbian context, conclude that music “remains a powerful spiritual pillar, a source of strength and faith in national unity, justice and freedom” and call for “developing students’ interest in the Orthodox faith, Serbian history and culture, which will contribute to a deeper understanding and assimilation of Serbian national identity” [9, p. 51].

In contrast to Serbian researchers, Indonesian authors [10] focused on the modern genre of Indonesian music – dangdut, which was formed in the late 1960s on the basis of traditional forms of music from Southeast Asia. The authors studied the impact of the television program D’Academy 5 Indosiar, which popularized dangdut, and called the main achievement of this program “ensuring the reproduction of new generations of dangdut musicians and performers in Indonesia”. The authors state that “the status of dangdut has been raised”, which is manifested in the fact that “this music is no longer considered rural and marginalized,” and note that such programs “contribute to the preservation of national heritage” [10, p. 365].

The work of Hojimatov [11], a researcher from Uzbekistan, is of interest. This work explores the relationship between national identity and artistic and aesthetic aspects on the example of Uzbek poetry. The author believes that literature and poetry play a central role in maintaining the national spirit, in particular through the depiction of national symbols, the struggle for freedom, and the reflection of national identity [11].

South African researcher M. Caleb studies the influence of traditional music on modern musical genres in the context of globalization and technological development. According to him, “Traditional music remains symbolic as a base and embodiment that encompasses indigenous knowledge systems that manifest through social norms, values, and cultural beliefs” [12, p. 1]. The author notes that the use of traditional musical elements in modern genres helps to popularize cultural heritage, but can lead to the simplification or commercialization of these traditions, which threatens their originality.

The issue of national identity remains relevant among Ukrainian researchers. The importance of this area of research is justified as “a test to protect the hermeneutic reception of national creativity from the ‘influence’ of the global

context” [13, p. 48]. Among the most recent works, we note the work of Lehenkyi and Arefieva (2022), who study the artist’s ethno-cultural identity as a phenomenon of Ukrainian fashion and music. The authors consider ethno-artistic traditions as a problem of “will, freedom of choice, freedom of self-determination of the artist” [14, p. 3]. The authors come to a pessimistic conclusion about the devaluation of “spiritual values” and the loss of the original deep ethnic intentions of ethnic groups.

Methodology

The study is based on a critical analysis of scientific, historical, and theoretical sources related to the role of music in shaping national identity. In order to ensure maximum completeness, monographic works, articles in professional journals, and musical works with the most pronounced national characteristics were analyzed.

The analysis was carried out using the methods of comparative research, historical and critical approach, and intertextual analysis. This approach allows us to trace the formation of views on the role of music in the formation of national identity at the present stage.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of sources suggests that culture is an integral part of the concept of national identity. A. Smith in his monograph “National Identity” defines it as “a sense of continuity between successive generations of a particular cultural community, shared memories of events and periods of its history, and each generation’s perceptions of the collective destiny of that community and its culture” [15, p. 25]. Similar definitions are found in European researchers, for example [16, p. 78]: “a generational sense of the continuity of a cultural community that develops in a historical context, i.e., as a self-awareness of group members that is formed and changed depending on the criteria that this group establishes in interaction with other social communities”. Kelman [17] considers national identity to be a collective phenomenon that arises from the presence of “common points” in people’s everyday lives: national symbols, language, history, national consciousness, and cultural artifacts. Guibernau [18] emphasizes that the sense of national identity does not depend on a person’s citizenship, but rather that it is “the distinctive culture of a nation that distinguishes it from other nations and serves as its calling card in the international community” [19, p. 26].

Although the above quotes do not directly refer to music, music is an integral part of culture, which prompts the authors to mention the art of music in one way or another. In particular, the aforementioned work by A. Smith mentions musical artifacts: “For Smetana and Dvořák in Bohemia, Sibelius in Finland, Bartók and Kodály in Hungary, and Borodin and Mussorgsky in Russia, the landscapes of their countries, the changing seasons, legends and monuments evoked strong nationalistic feelings that they were able to convey through their music to a wide and responsive audience” [15, p. 127].

Given that music is one of the arts that “involves the combination of vocal or instrumental sounds for beauty of form or emotional expression, usually according to cultural standards of rhythm, melody, and, in most Western music, harmony” [20], and art, in turn, is “a branch of human culture in which generalized meanings of the world are expressed by means of signs through concrete images” [21, p. 380], the relationship between music and national identity can be represented by the following diagram (Figure 1).

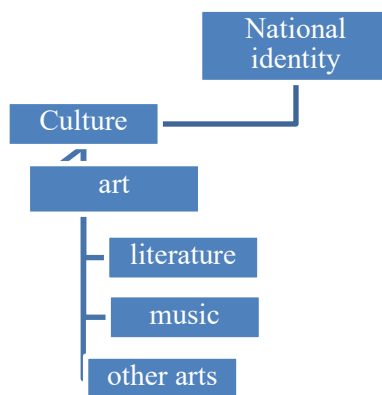


Figure 1. The relationship between music and national identity
Source: author’s development

Of course, the above applies not only to music, but also to other types of art, such as literature, fine arts, etc., as shown in the diagram (Figure 1). In particular, this structure reflects the position of A. Smith: “Who but poets, musicians, painters, and sculptors could bring the national ideal to life and spread it among the people? In this sense, David, Mickiewicz, and Sibelius were more valuable than several battalions of Father John’s Society of Gymnasts...” [15, p. 92]. However, let’s focus on the musical arts and try to answer the question, why can the musical arts act as a component of a sense of national identity? Studies show that musical art is diverse in its forms and includes folk music. According to the most general typology of F. Tagg, there is academic (art music), non-academic (popular music) and folk music [22].

Folk art seems to be the most rooted in the national culture, characterized by a long development over many centuries. According to A. Ivanytskyi, “the development of musical art went hand in hand with the development of thinking and language” [23] and the oldest genres of musical folklore associated with rituals emerged in the Neolithic period. Thus, in the case of folk music, we can talk about the accumulation of a “generational sense of continuity of cultural community” that goes back several decades. At the same time, musical folklore is multi-genre and covers different spheres of human activity and different aspects of the human emotional world. According to O. Kozarenko, “the musical content of our songs is much richer and deeper than the verbal content” [24, p. 9]. Thus, folk music, which has been developed through the transmission from generation to generation in the course of a centuries-old tradition, evokes in listeners the greatest sense of historical community, which is the basis of a sense of national identity.

Academic art (art music) can be more or less based on folk art. The interest of composers in folk art increased significantly in the Romantic era, which was associated with the struggle for independence of many nations of Eastern Europe. Almost all European national movements were reflected in composers’ work [4, p. 300]. The connections between academic music and folk art are, on the one hand, in the composers’ reference to folk stories in their works, and, on the other hand, and most importantly, in the intonational thesaurus of folk music, its characteristic melodies and rhythms. Let us present the most influential composers of Europe of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who initiated the tradition of references to musical folklore (Table 1).

Table 1. List of characteristic works of the Romantic period based on folklore sources

Composer	Country	Major works characterized by reliance on folklore
F. Chopin (1810-1849)	Poland	mazurkas, polonaises
M. Lysenko (1842-1912)	Ukraine	arrangements of folk songs, opera “Natalka Poltavka”, Ukrainian rhapsodies for piano
A. Dvořák (1841-1904)	Czech Republic	Symphony No. 9 “From the New World”, “Slavic Dances”
F. Liszt (1811-1866)	Hungary	Hungarian rhapsodies, Hungarian Fantasy
J. Sibelius (1865-1957)	Finland	Symphonic poem “Finland”, suite “Karelia”, songs on folk themes
E. Grieg (1843-1907)	Norway	“Per Gynt” (suite), Norwegian dances, arrangements of folk songs
S. Mokranjac (1856-1914)	Serbia	“Rukoveti” (cycles of arrangements of Serbian folk songs)

Source: author’s development

According to M. Schiller, in the nineteenth century, music, despite the lack of tools for mass distribution, already played a role in “mobilizing the people in the name of the nation” and this process “continued before and during the First World War” [4, p. 307]. As an example in Ukrainian musical culture, we can mention the rifle songs, which were formed during the liberation struggle of the early twentieth century.

In the music of the twentieth century, the reliance on folk music was embodied in the conditions of modern and, later, postmodern worldview. Researchers distinguish such a trend as “neofolklorism,” which combines modern techniques of musical art and reliance on folklore. Neofolklorism “is gaining importance in the cultural and spiritual revival of the country, preserving the invaluable heritage of the Ukrainian people, its cultural identity both at home and abroad” [25, p. 137].

In the United States, a surge of interest in folklore sources occurred in the 1930s and 1960s. The followers of the idea of national revival considered folklore as a “grassroots tradition” that “reflects the feelings, interests, values, and experiences of the American population” [26, p. 7].

In the 1970s, folk music actively entered pop culture and was described by such terms as “Newly Composed Folk Music (NCFM)”, “World music”, and in the Balkan countries – “Turbo Folk”. NCFM combines forms of popular music with “regional codes” such as “a peculiar rhythmic pattern, melodic line and instrumental or textual motif related to local traditions” [27, p. 14].

Historically, two waves of neofolklorism are distinguished. If the neofolklorism of the first half of the twentieth century was more associated with the use of individual songs of archaic folklore origin, which were developed on the basis of repetition and variation, often with the blurring of the contours of the folklore theme [28, p. 16], the works of the “second folklore wave” are more characterized by ethnophonism, which manifests itself as “the timbre and sound aspect of folk instrumentation” [29, p. 23]. At the same time, new trends in popular music emerged, such as folk rock, folk metal, and “ethnic music,” characterized by a combination of timbre intonation models of the respective popular music trends and timbre intonation models of folklore. The latter can be expressed by the inclusion of folk instruments, folk singing style along with the involvement of recognizable plots of folk epics. Ethnophonic elements also penetrate electronic music, in particular, “a combination of electronic sounds with the characteristic sounds of Ukrainian folklore,” which has received the general name folk electronics, is becoming popular in Ukrainian music culture [30, p. 13].

Here are examples of pieces that include the characteristic sounds of Ukrainian folklore (vocal or instrumental) in contemporary Ukrainian music (Table 2).

Table 2. Works of contemporary Ukrainian music that use sounds characteristic of folk music

Author	Title	Characteristic ethnic sounds
E. Stankovich	Folk opera “When the Fern Blossoms” (1978)	Folk choir combined with a symphony orchestra
A. Zagaykevich	“Nord/Ouest”	Authentic folk vocals combined with experimental electronics
	“Friend Li Po”	The sound of bandura or gujen combined with experimental electronics
Onuka (Natalia Zhyzhchenko)	“Vatra”, ‘Zenit’, ”Who”	The sound of bandura and other folk instruments combined with electronics
Go_A (Kateryna Pavlenko)	“Nightingale” (2020), “Noise” (2021)	Authentic folk vocals, flute in combination with electronics

Source: author’s compilation

What inspires contemporary performers to turn to folk elements in their work? Here is the answer to this question by Kateryna Pavlenko, the lead singer of the Ukrainian band Go_A, which seems particularly revealing: “For centuries, Ukraine has been trying to win the right to existence of its culture and language. And today is the very moment when we are not forbidden to speak Ukrainian, not forbidden to write and sing. You can just open a laptop and make cool Ukrainian music. Now everything is available and it’s the perfect moment to create something cool” [31].

Of course, the inclusion of folk elements is not only a choice of artists, but also a demand of the public. Folk motifs in contemporary music, regardless of genre, “directly affects the emotional side of man and develops a sense of patriotism because it has the power to penetrate directly the human spirit” [32, p. 50]. Songs dedicated to heroes and the homeland are of increased interest in the context of external threats, as “people feel more sensitive towards the defense of the homeland” [32, p. 250].

The latter statement denies the well-known opinion of T. Adorno in music sociology that music allegedly “eliminated any national differences after 1945, and the process of internationalization of the art of sound took place in sync with the debunking of the political principle of the nation-state” [33, p. 42]. On the contrary, sociologists view the processes of national revival as “a force of resistance to mass unification, and this force is identity itself” [34].

As an integral part of culture, music, whose original forms date back to the Neolithic era, is one of the foundations for crystallizing a sense of national identity. Musical art is capable of conveying feelings, emotions, experiences, referring to historical or everyday themes that evoke a similar emotional response from representatives of the national community and thus cement the sense of spiritual and cultural community that we call national identity.

In the nineteenth century, in the context of the Romantic era, the role of music as a unifying factor was significantly strengthened with the formation of national schools of composition in Eastern Europe, in particular through the works of F. Chopin (Poland), M. Lysenko (Ukraine), A. Dvořák (Czech Republic), E. Grieg (Norway), J. Sibelius (Finland), and others.

In the twentieth century, in the context of the modern and then postmodern era, neo-folklore trends in musical art played an important role in shaping national identity, which involve the combination of modern means of musical expression with the intonations of folk music, the characteristic sounds of folk musical instruments, folk singing, etc. In the twenty-first century, the combination of folk music sounds with electronic sounds is of particular interest in both experimental electronic music (A. Zagaykevych) and popular music (Go_A, Onuka, and others).

Thus, musical art is an integral part of culture that plays a significant role in the formation of national identity, using the arsenal of immanent means of expression accumulated over centuries of history – intonation, harmony, timbre and dynamic, and in interaction with other arts, especially the art of words.

Conclusion

Despite the considerable amount of accumulated material, both in music-ethnographic and musicological studies, the mechanisms of meaning transmission through music remain unclear. Although musicological research reveals certain harmonic, harmonic, and rhythmic characteristics of folk songs and their embodiment in compositional work that is somehow inspired by folklore sounds, the definition of an intonation thesaurus for each individual nation, or, in other words, the discovery of distinctive features of national music for a particular people, still seems to be an unsolved problem. We assume that the identification of characteristic features, their qualitative and quantitative indicators can be described by statistical methods, provided that computer analysis of musical material, in particular the analysis of folk melodies, is developed.

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