Development of Volyn Competition-Festival Movement: Search for Cultural Identity

Формування конкурсно-фестивального руху Волині: у пошуках культурної ідентичності

Abstract. The paper studies Volyn competition-festival movement. The aim is to reveal the features of formation of this movement in the aspect of the search for cultural identity. The hypothesis of this study was that Volyn competition-festival movement is an important form of developing the cultural identity for the Volyn community. The research was conducted on the basis of academic papers, dissertations, and monographs. The main stages of the formation of Volyn competition-festival movement were observed, as well as the organization of various competitions and festivals. Analysis of the selected literature allowed to identify the body of literature on the Volyn competition-festival movement phenomenon, to describe its manifestations and forms. Volyn competitions and festivals were classified by genre, style, thematic criteria, and more. Finally, the results of the analysis were generalized and the role of Volyn competition-festival movement in the formation of Volyn community cultural identity was determined.

Keywords: Volyn competition-festival movement, European identity, Ukrainian identity, Volyn identity, cultural continuity, Volyn community.

Problem statement. The term Volyn has two meanings. On the one hand, scholars consider Volyn or Volyn region as an administrative-territorial unit of modern Ukraine. Its territory is located in the basin of the southern tributaries of Pripyat and the upper reaches of Western Bug. On the other hand, Volyn or Great Volyn is a historical and ethnographic region. As an ethnographic region, it, in addition to the territory of Volyn region (Lutsk, Volodymyr-Volynsky, Kovel, Kamien-Kashyrgsky), also includes such towns as Rivne, Shepetivka, Zhytomyr, Novograd-Volynsky with adjacent territories. Volyn region borders with Poland in the west, with Belarus in the north, with Rivne region in the east, and with Lviv region in the south.

The roots of Volyn cultural traditions go back to antiquity. In different historical periods, Volyn was a part of various state formations. Each of them (Rus, Galicia-Volyn State, Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Russian Empire, Ukrainian National Republic, Poland, USSR) left its mark on the cultural development of this area. Since 1991, the Volyn region or Mala Volyn (which will be discussed in the paper) has been part of independent Ukraine.

Volyn has always been famous for its outstanding cultural figures. In particular, Halshka Hulevychivna was a well-known patroness and founder of the Kyiv Brotherhood and an active member of Lutsk Brotherhood. Danylo Bratkovsky, a talented poet and public figure; Yov Kondzelievych, an abbot of Lutsk Exaltation of Cross Monastery and famous icon painter; Olena Pchilka, an acclaimed writer, ethnographer and public figure; Lesya Ukrainka, an outstanding poet and playwright; Agatangel Krymsky, a historian, writer and translator; Vyacheslav Lypynsky, a historian and politician—all came from Volyn.

The Lutsk Brotherhood of the Exaltation of Cross played an important role in supporting Orthodox Christianity in Volyn during the seventeenth century. Its members were carrying out educational and charity work. During the 1630s, they constructed a brick building of Exaltation of Cross Church. The fraternity owned a school, a hospital, a library, and a printing house.

In the 1930s, Lutsk was the administrative center of the Volyn Voivodeship of Poland. At the time, the city had its own mobile theater (now Taras Shevchenko Volyn Academic Music-Drama Theater), a number of choirs,
and a music school (now Frederic Chopin Lutsk Music School No. 1). Volyn also had an extensive system of “Prosvita” cells. Founded in Lutsk in the early 1940s, the House of Folk Art performed cultural and educational functions in Volyn region. Since 1945, Volynians enjoyed the performances of Volyn Folk Choir (Hastrol, 2000, September 16, p. 4-5), and of the creative teams of Culture House that opened in the mid-1950s (since 1991 renamed as the People House “Prosvita”).

Currently, Volyn region has a developed cultural and artistic network. Many cultural institutions operate successfully in the regional center. These are such institutions as Volyn Regional Philharmonic, Taras Shevchenko Volyn Academic Regional Ukrainian Music-Drama Theater, Volyn Academic Regional Puppet Theater, various creative groups of Lutsk Culture Palace, libraries, museums, art galleries, etc. Igor Stravinsky Volyn College of Culture and Arts trains professionals for art schools and cultural institutions of the region. A wide network of cultural institutions is the basis for numerous competitions and festivals of various levels. Volyn Research and Methodological Cultural Center initiates a large number of such events.

Analysis of recent research and publications. General trends in the development of Volyn musical culture are covered in the dissertations by P. Szymanski and L. Ignatova. In particular, P. Szymanski’s work “Musical life of Volyn in 1920s–1930s” reveals the features of music performance, composition, music education of Great Volyn during the period. The researcher notes the variety of musical life at the region, namely, choral, vocal, instrumental performance, education work, concert activity. He also considers the specifics of formation of the local school of composition (Shymanskyi, 1999). Volyn musical culture is the subject of L. Ignatova’s research “Trends of Volyn musical culture development in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.” In this study, Volyn is considered as an administrative-territorial unit of north-western Ukraine. According to the researcher, Volyn musical culture is developing in line both with the national and regional tendencies of the Ukrainian cultural process; it acts as a distinctive and at the same time as an organic component of this process” (Ignatova, 2006, p. 12). Scientist writes that folklore festivals (“Berehynia”, “Polissia summer with folklore” and others) are one of the ways to preserve the local folklore tradition. These festivals play an important role in shaping the local musical cultural identity. Researcher also describes the role of local amateur groups, well known in Ukraine and abroad (“Kolos”, “Volynyanka” and others), church choirs (“Oranta”), philharmonic groups (“Cantabile”, Volyn folk choir), Volyn institutions of the art education, etc.

Olesya Lapchuk, a young researcher from Lutsk, was the first one to review the Volyn festivals (Lapchuk, 2016; Lapchuk, (n. d.); Lapchuk, 2015). In her opinion, information about Volyn festivals of the late 20th and early 21st centuries is scant. It “sheds light on the history of this segment of the festival movement in Ukraine only partially” (Lapchuk, (n. d.), p. 89). According to the scholar, the available information also “in no way encourages generalizations or even analysis of the effectiveness of what has been done” (Lapchuk, (n. d.), p. 89). Nevertheless, her outline of the Volyn festival movement in the 1980–1990s makes it possible to systematize the phenomena during this period, to point out at the main directions and trends of its development.

Aim of this paper is to reveal the features of the Volyn competition-festival movement in an aspect of its search for cultural identity.

Results and discussion. The origin of Volyn competition-festival movement dates back to the 1980s–1990s, when the “Iron Curtain” slightly opened, and the USSR republics established their first contacts with Western Europe during the Perestroika period. The initiation of information and cultural exchange between the countries of the Eastern Bloc and the free world countries was also a favorable factor.

A number of festivals currently form the artistic face of Volyn on the map of Ukraine: International festival of Ukrainian folklore “Berehynia”, International festival of puppet theaters “Christmas mystery”, International festival “Polish summer with folklore”, All-Ukraine festival of sung poetry and authors’ songs “Oberig”, the musical festival “Stravinsky and Ukraine,” and many others. Famous artists and creative groups play an important role in this matter. Marenych trio; Vasyl Zinkevych, a People’s Artist of Ukraine; Vasyl Chepelyuk, a People’s Artist of Ukraine; Philharmonic groups Volyn State Academic Folk Choir (conductor Oleksandr Stadnyk, an Honored Artist of Ukraine), “Cantabile” Chamber Orchestra (conducted Toviy Rivets, a People’s Artist of Ukraine), Lutsk Sanct-Trinity Cathedral Choir “Oranta” (headed by Vasyl Moisiyuk, an Honored Artist of Ukraine), and others are the pride of Volyn region.

Volyn Research and Methodological Cultural Center (before 1996 the Volyn Center of Folk Art) carries out research, methodological, organizational, editorial, publishing, educational and other activities in the field of culture and arts. It has an important role in Volyn competition-festival movement. The Center has a large number of additional objectives: research and methodological support of the activities of the culture houses of the districts, research on the organization of leisure for residents of different social and age groups, organization of culture and recreation parks, competitions among students of art schools, etc. Center of Culture most actively participates in organization and implementation of such significant projects for Volyn as the International festival of Ukrainian folklore “Berehynia” and Lesya Ukrainka All-Ukraine festival of choral art. The institution prepares information and methodical recommendations on topical issues of culture, selects script materials, etc.

Competitions and festivals of Volyn belong to different genres of culture and art. They vary in subject matter, forms of organization and funding, duration, structure, goals and tasks. Competitions and festivals at the local level are often initiated by non-governmental organizations. A separate niche is the events for children. Some of the competition and festival projects in Volyn are a part of larger national creative initiatives.
The analysis of Volyn competition-festival movement gives grounds to draw the following conclusions. The formation of the network of cultural institutions in Lutsk and leading cities of this region (Kovel, Volodymyr-Volynsky, Novovolynsk, Gorokhiv, Kamin-Kashyrski)—number of public associations, creative unions, non-governmental creative organizations)—has become an important condition of Volyn competition-festival movement in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Development of this network took a long time. Its preconditions were determined by the features of the culture and art of Volyn during the Soviet and pre-Soviet periods. Unfortunately, the fact that Volyn was a part of different states during the twentieth century: the USSR (until 1991), Poland (until 1939), Russian Empire (until 1917) negatively affected the processes of cultural and artistic continuity. It complicated shaping the original cultural face of this region and its self-awareness as an integral part of the Ukrainian heritage.

Understanding the cultural and artistic processes in Volyn began relatively recently (studies by P. Szymanski, L. Ignatova, O. Lapchuk, and others). In this regard, the history of those processes still has too many blank pages. Another reason for that is the destruction of many monuments, the distortion or concealment of historical facts with political purposes. Based on this, the return of forgotten and lost pages of Volyn culture is very important today.

A review of the cultural and artistic processes of Volyn confirmed that the cultural traditions of this region go back to ancient times. These traditions echo Volyn’s being part of various state formations: Rus, Galicia-Volyn State, Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Russian Empire, Ukrainian National Republic, Poland, the USSR. They also represent the development of ideas proposed by prominent figures of the region, such as Halshka Gulevychivna, Danylo Bratkovsky, Yov Kondzelevych, Olena Pchilka, Lesya Ukrainka, and others. Cultural events of the latest stage of Volyn history made the most significant impact on the competition and festival activities of the region. The process started with the formation of Volyn cultural institutions in Poland during the 1930s (theater, music school, “Prosvita” centers). Further development of these institutions continued during the Soviet period (cultural houses, theaters, the regional philharmonic, the folk creativity house, art educational institutions, libraries, museums, art galleries). That infrastructure was renewed and reformed in independent Ukraine. Currently, Volyn Regional Philharmonic, Taras Shevchenko Volyn Academic Regional Ukrainian Music-Drama Theater, Volyn Academic Regional Puppet Theater, Lutsk City Culture Palace, Igor Stravinsky Volyn Culture and Arts College, and other cultural institutions are the main representative centers of Volyn culture. This network of institutions serves as a foundation for organizing various competitions and festivals, with the Volyn Research and Methodological Cultural Center being the main element in this process.

A number of creative projects form the cultural face of Volyn on the map of Ukraine, e.g. the International festival of Ukrainian folklore “Berehynia”, International festival of puppet theater “Christmas mystery”, International festival “Polish summer with folklore”, All-Ukraine festival of sung poetry and author’s song “Obereg”, music festival “Stravinsky and Ukraine”, Lesya Ukrainka All-Ukraine choir competition, and Ukrainian pop song Festival “On Svitiaz waves.” Volyn annually gathers representatives of many countries and continents on its land for these events and, thus, secured the status of a festival region. Marenych Trio, Vasyl Zinkeych, Vasyl Chepelyuk, and such groups of the regional philharmonic as State Academic Volyn Folk Choir, “Cantabile” Chamber Orchestra, “Accord” Vocal Quartet and Lutsk Sanct-Trinity Cathedral Choir “Oranta” are the pride of Volyn land.

A study of Volyn cultural development trends showed that the best bands of the region began their touring activity far in the 1970s. Folk dance ensemble “Volynyanka”, Volyn folk choir, children’s dance ensemble “Volynyanochka” were among the first groups. Their activity was expanding the creative horizons and interests of Volyn people. It was also improving the level of their creativity. Cultural exchange between Volyn region and European countries was stimulating the emergence of Volyn vocal and instrumental ensembles (“Lel”, “Two colors”, “Sources”, “Land”) and jazz groups (“Classic dixieland band”). At the same time, the original face of Volyn culture was forming, first of all, by various folk groups. At the present stage, they remained a decisive factor in the creative face of the region. The emphasis was on local identity that was reflected in the themes for songs and scripts (“Song about Volyn”, “Flax bloomed at Volyn”, “Ancient Volyn city”, “Volyn polka”, “Krutak”, “Polisia tryndychki”, “Volyn fun”, “We are from Volyn”, “Volyn leg-steps”, and others).

The development of Volyn academic choral performance is conditioned mainly by the activity of Lutsk Sanct-Trinity Cathedral Choir “Oranta.” This choir is an authoritative group in all respects. It demonstrates the level of artistic and aesthetic requests and opportunities of Volyn choral art. The artistic style of “Oranta” is determined by Ukrainian repertoire, including liturgical, by performance of the works by Volyn composers (M. Telezhinsky, V. Gerasymchuk, V. Tymozhynsky), by intensity of educational, competitive and festival activities. Similar tendencies are more or less characteristic of other Volyn groups creativity — “Cantabile” Chamber Orchestra, “Accord” Vocal Quartet, “Garmyder” Studio Theater, etc.

The institutional environment of Volyn competition-festival movement is formed by the creative groups of Lutsk City Culture Palace (“Youth”, “Posvitat”), Volyn Research and Methodological Cultural Center (“Chachka”), Igor Stravinsky Volyn Culture and Arts College (“Lubart”, “Renaissance”, “Volyn silver Strings”, “Family”), creative groups of regional art schools and district culture houses. The activity of Taras Shevchenko Volyn Academic Regional Ukrainian Music-Drama Theater also gave a powerful impetus to the increase of the competition and festival activity of the region. This institution is used as a base for most gala concerts, openings and closings of competitions and festivals. A similar level of intensity marked the activities of the Volyn
Academic Regional Puppet Theater. For the last thirty years, this collective has been a leading one in the region not only quantitatively, but also in regard to heuristic artistic discoveries (Republican festival of puppet theaters, Republican festival of performances by Lesya Ukrainka dramas, International festival “Christmas mystery”).

A great role in Volyn competition-festival movement belongs to Volyn Research and Methodological Center (until 1996 the Volyn Center of Folk Art). The Center organized regional competitions and festivals, annual or biennial: for instance, Natalia Uzhviy competition of theater groups – “The land is been generous of talents,” the competition of readers in Kolodyazhne village, dedicated to the birthday of Lesya Ukrainka, Illya Bogdanets competition of choreographic groups, the competition of folk instrumental music “Kalyanova sopilka,” the competition of kobzar art “Ring, banduro,” the competitions of performers on string, wind, percussion, folk instruments, young composers, pianists, accordionists, artists, children’s choirs, folk instruments orchestras, folk groups “Volyn rainbow”, pipers “Volyn gukovytśia”; festival “Chornobyl pain”, the festival of insurgent and shooting song “For the freedom of Ukraine”, dedicated to the UPA, the festival of wind music and others.

A review of Volyn competition-festival movement allowed to draw the following conclusions. There is a significant number of Volyn competitions and festivals of different types of art and genres, themes, forms of organization and funding, duration and structure, including:

– district festivals: “Forest song” (Kovel district), “Polissia sings” (Lyubeshiv district), “Rozhysche drawing” (Rozhysche district), “Kolky fair” (Manevychi district), “The cossack family is immortal” (Gorokhiv district), “Ukrainian loaf—the constellation” (Volodymyr-Volynsky district),
– All-Ukraine competitions: “Volyn hukovytsia,” “Lesya’s autumn,” “Volyn kobzaryk”,
– All-Ukraine festivals: “Great Volyn songs”, “Life colors”, “Banderstadt”,
– All-Ukraine festivals-competitions: “Volodymyr”, “Oberg”,
– international competitions: “Chopin spring”,
– international festivals: “Art jazz cooperation,” “Jazz bez,” “Traveling hanger,” “Stravinsky and Ukraine,” “Children FilmFest,” “Children of the world,” “MERIDIANLUTSK,” “Berehynia,” “Polissia summer with folklore.”

Volyn is not unique in its richness and thematic diversity of festival events. In the globalized world and post-information society, the intensity of creative contacts is characteristic for each of the regions of Ukraine. Simultaneously, the analysis of genre, thematic, organizational and structural features of competitions and festivals of Volyn makes it possible to identify the characteristics of the Volyn competition-festival movement, which are closely linked to the regional cultural traditions, its historical and mental features, geographical and economical conditions. An overview of Volyn competition-festival map allows to note the special role of competitions and festivals of the following varieties:

– the folklore competitions and festivals (“Polissia sings,” “Ukrainian loaf — the constellation,” “Berehynia,” “Polissia summer with folklore,” etc.),
– the patriotic competitions and festivals (“The cossack family is immortal,” “Vovchak — Volyn Sich,” “In the songs of my people — the fate of Ukraine,” “For the will of Ukraine,” “Banderstadt,” etc.),
– the religious-traditional competitions and festivals (“Christmas in Lutsk,” “Easter in Lutsk,” “Christmas carols,” “Merry Christmas,” “Easter miracle,” “Mykolai is coming to the children,” etc.),
– the eurocentric competitions and festivals (“Lutsk castle — the cradle of united Europe,” “Lutsk — the center of Europe”.

of Europe,” “Art jazz cooperation,” “Jazz bez,” “Stravinsky and Ukraine,” “Children film festival,” “Chopin spring,” etc.).

Volyn Research and Methodological Cultural Center implements the main initiatives for the competition and festival movement of the region. However, district culture houses deal with many local actions, as well as the local authorities and non-governmental organizations. Activities for children are a significant part of such initiatives. Some of the competition and festival projects in Volyn reach the national level. All competitive-festival projects could be categorized according to the nature of their organization and funding (budgetary, commercial, charitable), age of the target group (adults, children), genre content.

A group of Volyn festivals is aimed at youth practices, underground, alternative and popular music. They combine different trends of youth cultural interests of Western orientation and reflect the desire to synthesize of arts and intellectual creativity. The regional rock festival “Rock culture,” the festival of modern Ukrainian song “Oberig,” the youth festival “Straw bell” are in this group. A special place in this group of youth festivals belongs to the students’ festival “Lesya’s song.” It played an important role in the development of the interests of young audience, as well as contributed to the expression of the local festival movement. The European face of Lutsk and Volyn is also formed with the help of jazz festivals “Art Jazz cooperation,” “Jazz bez”, the festival of alternative music “Bandershadt”, the festival-competition of choreography “Another dimension.”

A prominent place in the development of Volyn culture and art belongs to local competitions and festivals of national and international level. They are the artistic trademark of the region, forming a positive cultural image of Volyn. This group of creative actions includes All-Ukraine competition of performers on pipes and cymbals “Volyn hukovytysia”, Lesya Ukrainka All-Ukraine choir competition, Republican festival of puppet theaters, Republican festival of performances based on Lesya Ukrainka’s dramas, International festival “Christmas mystery,” International festival of Ukrainian folklore “Berehynia,” International festival “Polissya summer with folklore,” music festival “Stravinsky and Ukraine.”

At the present stage, Volyn competition and festival movement is determined by:
- the prevalence of festival activity over competition,
- the approval of the iconic status of folklore festivals;
- the European avant-garde vector of the classical music festivals;
- the priority of jazz projects in the circle of the latest trends.

Conclusions. An analysis of Volyn competition and festival movement in the aspect of cultural identity requires turning to Myroslava Novakovych’s work “Habsburg era Galician music (1772–1918) in the context of the national identity phenomenon.” This study is one of the first in musicology on this issue. Myroslava Novakovych notes that “the concept of identity is inseparable from cultural memory” (Novakovych, 2020, p. 2), with “cultural heritage” (Novakovych, 2020, p. 3) being a “concentrated expression of history and culture” (Novakovych, 2020, p. 32). The researcher points out that cultural identity is a procedural phenomenon, which “is acquired as a result of finding and gradually selecting the most characteristic original forms of musical presentation, accepted by the community for themselves and recognizable to others” (Novakovych, 2020, p. 51) and as such it can take hybrid and borderline forms.

M. Novakovych builds a key approach to the national identity concept of Galician music from the Habsburg era on the basis of the trichotomy of the general, special and individual. In the light of this approach, Galician music is comprehended as a synthesis of Viennese (general), Galician (region-specific), and local identity, embodied in creativity of Peremysl composition school (individual). Myroslava Novakovych also emphasizes that culture plays a “decisive role in the construction of national identity; and the acquisition of identity is always associated with the assimilation of a certain culture, which contributes to the creation of ties of solidarity, symbols, values, and views between members of a community” (Novakovych, 2020, p. 419).

A study of Volyn competition and festival movement of the late 20th and early 21st centuries in this aspect led to the following conclusions. In the light of the trichotomy of general, region-specific, and individual, the cultural identity of Volyn competition-festival movement appears as a manifestation of:

1) European identity (music festival “Stravinsky and Ukraine,” competition “Chopin spring,” festival “Art jazz cooperation,” “Jazz bez”);

2) Ukrainian identity (Festival of Ukrainian folklore “Berehynia,” festival “Bandershadt”);


Undoubtedly, the original face of Volyn culture has been formed primarily by the folklore competitions, festivals, folklore groups.

An important tool of acknowledging the cultural memory and cultural heritage is understanding that the cultural traditions of Volyn region go back centuries. They echo the presence of Volyn as part of various state formations — Kyivan Rus, Galicia-Volyn State, Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Russian Empire, Ukrainian
Досліджено конкурсно-фестивальний рух Волині у пошуках культурної ідентичності. Мета статті — розкрити особливості формування конкурсно-фестивального руху Волині в аспекті пошуків культурної ідентичності. Гіпотезою дослідження було уважати, що конкурсно-фестивальний рух Волині є одним з важливих форм формування культурної ідентичності волинської громади. Дослідження проведено шляхом збирання джерелної бази за обраною проблематикою — підбору наукових статей, дисертацій, монографій, а також здійснення власних спостережень за основними етапами формування конкурсно-фестивального руху Волині, організацією й проведенням різних конкурсів та фестивалів. Наступним кроком був аналіз літератури для з'ясування дослідженої явища конкурсно-фестивального руху Волині, опису його проявів і форм. Було зроблено спробу класифікації конкурсів і фестивалів Волині за жанровими, стилевими, тематичними критеріями тощо. Підсумком дослідження стало зазначення результатів проведеного аналізу, визначення ролі конкурсно-фестивального руху Волині у формуванні культурної ідентичності волинської громади.

Ключові слова: конкурсно-фестивальний рух Волині, європейська ідентичність, українська ідентичність, волинська ідентичність, культурна спадкоємність, волинська громада.

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