

## Ihor Sonevytsky

Ihor Sonevytsky was a prominent Ukrainian-American composer, musicologist and educator. His compositions, musicological works and concert activity reflected the trends in the Ukrainian-American cultural milieu in the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He successfully combined performance, conducting, composition and writing on different subjects related to Ukrainian music, which also coincided with his work as a community activist and music director. His interest in liturgical music gave an impetus to combining classical and traditional approaches in sacred music with folk idioms that stem from traditional Ukrainian music.

For over fifty years Sonevytsky was active in the field of American music, while developing the Ukrainian elements in his works. Despite many assignments and obligations in musicology and conducting, Sonevytsky dedicated most of his time to composition. He worked successfully in a variety of genres, from opera, ballet and music for stage productions, to symphonic music, chamber works, piano compositions and choral music. Music for solo voice and choral works appealed to him most. Sonevytsky consistently focused on the expansion of music for different performers, from well-established choruses to amateur groups. He wrote a variety of compositions for children, and also for mixed chorus and vocal ensembles. His success with vocal composition was based on his understanding and appreciation of traditional folk elements, which he elegantly combined with classical, traditional form.

To a great extent Sonevytsky followed the traditions of the Ukrainian national school established by Mykola Lysenko, who worked on utilizing classical structure in music composition for the development of traditional idioms. The combination of the flexible vocal polyphony of traditional Ukrainian folk idioms with western European structural unity, developed mainly by the Classical composers of the Viennese School, blended naturally in Sonevytsky's music. His choral and vocal compositions were rooted in Ukrainian folk music, in his development of vocal and instrumental tunes, and also in sacred choral concertos. At the same time Sonevytsky added new dimensions to the art song-romance, with elements derived from the Galician romance (*pobutovyi halyts'kyi romans*).

Sonevytsky received a sound Ukrainian-German musical education that helped him develop his ethnically distinctive music. Sonevytsky had roots in music that inspired composers such as Lysenko, Mykola Leontovych, Alexander Koshetz, Stanislav Liudkevych and Vasyl Barvinsky. At the same time, some Austrian facets of this style are reminiscent of Franz Schubert or Johann Strauss.

Following his predecessors in correlating words and music, Sonevytsky developed an individual signature in the interpretation of lyrical poetry. His attention to the smallest fluctuation in a text was reflected immediately in the melodic or harmonic part of his compositions. The relative simplicity of Sonevytsky's vocal line displays the soloist to his best advantage, and the instrumental accompaniment never overshadows the vocal line. Sonevytsky's art songs, arrangements and vocal ensembles are characterized by an elegant style and a logical harmonic progression that ranges from Classicism, to a neo-Baroque polyphonic development, to contemporary quasi-cluster harmonic gravitation. There is an unexpected freshness in this harmonic development that adds lightness even to traditional counterpoint.

One of the characteristics of Sonevytsky's style is diversity in approach to the textual part of his compositions. There range from the imitation of folk melodic and rhythmical patterns in compositions to the poetry of Taras Shevchenko, delineation of the melodic line and more elaborate accompaniment in his music to the poetry of Bohdan-Ihor Antonych or Vasyl Symonenko, an introverted emotional atmosphere in religious compositions and philosophical stasis in vocal music to texts by Ivan Franko. All of these elements are aligned by the composer's ability to "vocalize" his music. Sonevytsky always treated the textual and musical parts of his compositions equally. Perhaps his natural feeling for "poetic melodism" and interest in texts was rooted in his genuine interest in literature. He had been exposed to classical literature at school, but first and foremost in his family.

Ihor Sonevytsky's father, Mykhailo, was a philologist and writer. In addition to his teaching assignments in Ukrainian schools in Galicia, at a seminary and later his professorship in Rome,<sup>1</sup> he wrote about ancient literature, focusing on the history of Greek literature.<sup>2</sup> His mother Olha,

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<sup>1</sup> The Pope Clement Ukrainian Catholic University in Rome.

<sup>2</sup> Mykhailo Sonevytsky was author of a history of Greek literature. He directed theatrical plays and established a high school in the family's village of Hadynkivtsi.

née Lasovska, was a journalist prominent in the Ukrainian community, managing an art gallery and participating in the Studio Chorus of Lviv City Radio, where composer Mykola Kolessa was a conductor.

Ihor Sonevytsky was born on 2 January 1926 in Hadynkivtsi, situated in central Galicia near Chortkiv, in the Ternopil region. His interest in music was obvious from a very early age, and at age 13 he entered the Lysenko Music Institute in Lviv, the major music school in western Ukraine at that time. After graduating from the First Ukrainian High School in 1944, Sonevytsky, following the recommendation of Vasyl Barvinsky, left Lviv for Austria. He continued his education at Vienna's Music Academy, where he studied with Professor Josef Max. Sonevytsky received a full scholarship, enabling him to pursue his education.<sup>3</sup> Despite the hardships of post-war Europe, Sonevytsky decided to continue his studies in Munich at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in 1945, receiving his Diploma in 1950. He graduated with a major in composition and conducting, and a minor in piano. During his last two years at the academy, Sonevytsky conducted its symphony orchestra and also performed as a choral conductor for the Ukrainian Opera Ensemble, led by Bohdan Piurko.

As a young musician Sonevytsky received the highest praise from his professors and colleagues. Among them were Professor Knapp (conducting) and Dr. Zenowij Lysko (musicology). He was considered the best conductor in his class, performing the Second Suite by Benjamin Britten with the academy's orchestra.

Sonevytsky, like many other musicians, composers and artists, moved to the United States in the 1950s. Dividing his attention between piano performance, conducting and composition, Sonevytsky also received a PhD in musicology. The symbiosis between composition and musicology gave a special dimension to his works based upon folk elements, traditional tunes and dance rhythms derived from different regions of Ukraine. He explored the endless possibilities of combining contemporary idioms and modern forms with folk motifs and other musical elements of regional styles, for example, traditional Carpathian music. This aspect of Sonevytsky's style fit into 20<sup>th</sup>-century intercultural composition, which developed along with

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<sup>3</sup> The family of Ukrainian Liubomyr Mudretsky gave Sonevytsky a place to stay, along with providing other support.

the formation of ethnomusicology as a scientific discipline, supplementing and enhancing classical musicology in the second part of the century.

Sonevytsky's interest in national elements led to the second important part of his creative profile: musicology. He authored numerous articles in newspapers and professional journals, and edited monographs and musical compositions by different authors. He published several books on music historiography, the musical life of the Ukrainian diaspora and the development of ethnomusicology. One of his first books, about Ukrainian composer Artem Vedel, was published in New York in 1966<sup>4</sup> and subsequently Sonevytsky was active as both composer and musicologist.

Traditional Ukrainian music was always an element of his compositions and musicological works, although Sonevytsky rarely used direct quotations in his works. He also understood that folk and classical music based on traditional elements could not survive in the contemporary world without a strong relationship with religious music. For an extended period in the history of Ukrainian culture, music was supported and developed to a great extent within the tradition of Orthodox Christianity. Taking into consideration the historical development of Ukraine as a border state within eastern Europe, secular and religious music blended for centuries and were perceived as a vehicle of national sustainability. This symbiotic relationship faced an interesting dilemma in the context of multicultural musical life in the United States. A musical tradition formed outside of American culture faced a problem, either of being diluted within the dominant culture or transforming to the point of losing its intrinsic elements. In Sonevytsky's case tradition played a very important role in preserving the national characteristics of ethnic and church music, providing an important link between contemporary context and traditional facets within the musical culture. Sonevytsky's strong interest in this area was not coincidental. He was fortunate to meet and to be a student of one of the most important ethnomusicologists and scholars in the Ukrainian diaspora, Zenowij Lysko, author of the monumental work *Ukrains'ki narodni melodiï* (Ukrainian folk melodies) in 10 volumes. Lysko not only inspired his students to search for the primary source of inspiration in their compositions, but in his lectures he also gave a broad view of the possibilities of utilizing folk materials that would coincide with contemporary idioms.

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<sup>4</sup> *Artem Vedel' i ioho muzychna spadschyna* [Artem Vedel and his musical legacy], New York: 1966.

Sonevytsky was aware of the opportunities that religious music could provide for the contemporary composer and devoted special attention to the development of sacral elements both in his writings and compositions. In his musicological works Sonevytsky also focused on correlating secular and religious music. He completed an extensive work on the influence of traditional song on church music, which became the foundation of the PhD dissertation he defended at the Ukrainian Free University in Munich in 1961. In addition to his reviews and musicological works, Sonevytsky lectured extensively on the subject.

From 1970 he lectured on the history of Ukrainian music at the Ukrainian Catholic University in Rome, where religious music was designated as a separate course of study. Although he resided in the U.S. permanently from the 1950s, he presented his course at the university for a number of years. Sonevytsky continued the legacy of his teachers from the Lysenko Music Institute in Lviv, which had been headed by Stanyslav Liudkevych and Vasyl Barvinsky. Their dedication to the development of music culture and education up to the college level in western Ukraine served as a model for Sonevytsky in his pedagogical activity. He became one of the founders of the Ukrainian Music Institute of America. After the death of Roman Sawycky, who established professional music education at the institute, Sonevytsky maintained the high standards of this institution as its director.<sup>5</sup> He saw this endeavor as a continuation of the efforts of his predecessors in the formation of the Lysenko Music Institute, with its branches throughout western Ukraine. The Ukrainian Music Institute of America, with branches in ten states, was a replica of the institute in Ukraine, but also served as a new form of community school in the U.S. The development of the curriculum extended beyond instruction on a particular instrument, offering a package that included theoretical disciplines, along with music history and composition. Sonevytsky facilitated the formation of the institute's faculty, which included musicians trained in Austria, Bohemia, Germany and Belgium. Among them were vocalists, pianists, cellists, violists, musicologists and composers, including Roman Sawycky, Wasyl Wytwycky, Zenowij Lysko, Liubka Kolessa, Daria Hordynska-Karanowycz, Taissa Bohdanska, Wasyl Bezkorowajnyj, Kalyna Cziczka-Andrienko, Jurij Oransky, Mykola Fomenko and later the founder of the Promin vocal ensemble Donna Wolansky, musicologist Tamara Bulat, pianist Thomas Hrynkiw and others.

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<sup>5</sup> From 1959 to 1961 Sonevytsky was director of the Ukrainian Music Institute of America (New York).

Sonevytsky was interested in vocal music as both composer and conductor, because he understood that without the first-hand experience of conducting and developing vocal groups he would not have a practical knowledge of vocal texture, vocal *tessitura* and other elements that make vocal music “singable” by professional, as well as amateur choirs. In 1954 he became a founder of the Studio Chorus that became an integral part of the Literary-Artistic Club.<sup>6</sup> The group became very popular in the Ukrainian diaspora and Sonevytsky planned to develop a choral school for training choral singers and conductors. The period between 1950 and 1960 was prolific for Sonevytsky as a composer, pianist and conductor. He became conductor of the Ukrainian Congress Metropolitan Committee (1956), and in 1961 he was appointed music advisor to the committee. Seeing the development of choral singing as a cornerstone of the expression of Ukrainian “musicality,” he dedicated much energy to creating an appropriate milieu for choral training. In 1962 Sonevytsky became a founder of the Youth Opera Ensemble, where he was a conductor and concertmaster. He had organized the Nestor Nyzhankivsky String Orchestra in 1956. These two groups became “in house” ensembles at the Ukrainian Music Institute. Focusing on performance in the context of music education, Sonevytsky worked diligently on the development of educational materials and also introduced his students to the classical examples of Ukrainian music. With these groups he developed a repertoire that consisted of classical and contemporary music. One of the highlights of the 1962 concert season included the one-act opera *Nocturne*, one of the last operas by Mykola Lysenko.<sup>7</sup>

Sonevytsky always kept in mind that Ukrainian music in the diaspora served as a vehicle for maintaining ethnic identity and preserving tradition. However, the work of individuals who dedicated their lives and talents to maintaining a professional musical standard was not supported by monetary grants or state funding. This dilemma was faced by most of music institutions dedicated to the preservation of ethnic culture in America. In his musical life Sonevytsky was aware he was presenting Ukrainian music in this context, while striving for professionalism in his work as a musician in various capacities.

This aspect was apparent in his approach to developing a choral culture in the eastern United States. Over the years Sonevytsky conducted the Dumka Chorus of New York, the Taras

<sup>6</sup> Sonevytsky was a co-founder of the Literary-Artistic Club, established in 1950.

<sup>7</sup> This production was dedicated to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lysenko’s death.

Shevchenko Chorus from Cleveland and the Trembita Chorus from Newark. Despite the difficulties associated with amateur choral groups, Sonevytsky achieved near-professional standards that brought the choirs into the spotlight and later led to performances at many American concert venues, including Carnegie Hall in New York.

One of the hallmarks of Sonevytsky's work with choral groups was that he always included music from different periods, from Classical sacred concertos by Artem Vedel and Dmytro Bortniansky, to Classical and Romantic compositions by both Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian composers. The inclusion of choral music by non-Ukrainians served to present Ukrainian music in the context of the European tradition and to give listeners an opportunity to appreciate Ukrainian music as a vital part of the multicultural phenomenon of the American musical milieu.

The concept of multiculturalism is also present in Sonevytsky's musicological works and became a stylistic signature in his music for the stage. His collaboration with the Ukrainian Stage Ensemble (Studiia Mystets'koho Slova), a group led by the Ukrainian stage director Lidia Krushelnytsky in New York, yielded several music scores for the stage. This group is still actively focused on performances of contemporary and classic poetry and literary works and is a unique artistic entity developing national traditions within a multicultural experience for a bilingual audience. Sonevytsky often participated as a performer in the productions, as well as a composer. Beginning in 1966 he composed twenty-eight works<sup>8</sup> for the stage based on the works of Ukrainian writers and poets such as Lesia Ukrainka, Spyrydon Cherkasenko, Ivan Franko, Taras Shevchenko, Lina Kostenko and Ivan Kocherha, and also Hans Christian Andersen, Carlo Goldoni and Samuil Marshak.

Sonevytsky composed one opera, *Zoria* (The star), in 1963.<sup>9</sup> This one-act opera was a satire that condemned totalitarian society, the libretto of the opera clearly alluding to Soviet political interference in culture and control over music in particular. The opera's music conveys suppression of the arts through the oversimplification of the villain's vocal part and the non-vocal approach to depicting political oppression by the regime.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Stefaniia Pavlyshyn, *Ihor Sonevyts'kyi*. Lviv: Lviv Composers' Union, 1995: 66.

<sup>9</sup> Libretto by Leonid Poltava, the first title was *Plativka* (Record), after the second revision in 1971 the composer renamed the opera *Contest*, and finally, after a third revision in 1992, the opera was presented under the title *Zoria*.

<sup>10</sup> The opera is scored for orchestra and five soloists, Commissar (bass-baritone), Ballerina, Secretary (silent character), Leader (recitative-declamation) and Messenger.

*Popeliushka* (Cinderella, 1966) is a three-act ballet originally written for young dancers. After its first performance in 1967 the work was presented several times by the dance company led by Roma Pryma-Bohachevsky in New York.

To appreciate the contribution of a particular composer to the overall musical process, one has to underline the elements of innovation and formulation that distinguish his or her writings or compositions. Sonevytsky possessed a special talent for developing folk elements, which added a new dimension to his compositions and blended naturally with contemporary idioms. Sonevytsky began composing in early 1940, and being familiar with vocal music since childhood, his first compositions were for chorus and for voice. Two main paths forged the composer's artistic face—secular vocal music and sacred music, including liturgical compositions.

His first work for chorus, “Vidrodzhenets'kyi hymn” (Hymn of rebirth) was composed in 1944, during the German occupation of western Ukraine. Even though the composer was not involved in politics, his works contained Ukrainian national sentiments. These became obvious in his musical language employing folk idioms and most particularly in his religious music, associated with the choral concertos of his predecessors. Some of these features had already been displayed in his compositions such as his Liturgy for a *cappella* chorus.<sup>11</sup> Despite interruptions in his work during World War II, post-war transition and his subsequent immigration to the United States, Sonevytsky developed this theme in compositions of different genres: “Bohorodytse Divo” (Virgin Mother of God, 1947), *Canti Spirituali* in three parts for soloist and chorus with piano accompaniment (1987), “Psalm of David” (1971), Liturgy for bass and mixed *a cappella* chorus (1990), “Khrystos voskres” (Christ is risen) for soprano and mixed chorus (1991) and other compositions. The composer developed his religious music based upon the living traditions to which he had been exposed in Ukraine, and also upon his studies of the music of Bortniansky and Vedel. Sonevytsky's interest in the music of the latter resulted in the musicological work *Artem Vedel' i ioho muzychna spadshchyna* (Artem Vedel and his musical legacy), as well as his editorial work on the composer's liturgical music.<sup>12</sup> Sonevytsky's longstanding association with the Ukrainian Catholic University in Rome and personal affection for the hierarch of the

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<sup>11</sup> Several parts of the Liturgy were completed in 1945 in Vienna.

<sup>12</sup> *Dukhovni tvory Artemiia Lukianovycha Vedelia* (The spiritual works of Artemii Lukianovych Vedel), New York, 1985.



Ukrainian Catholic Church, Josyf Slipyj, added a special touch to his sacred compositions. Even though vocal music, particularly art songs, became predominant in the composer's portfolio, music associated with the Ukrainian Catholic tradition, while not numerous, retained a particular quality peculiar to his religious compositions.

Sonevytsky's approach to religious themes was not scholastic and did not duplicate typical elements such as harmonic progressions or melodic clichés, but rather was highly emotional, with the lyrical side prevailing over monastic detachment. The novelty of his liturgical music was in the natural blend of national folk idioms and sacral traditions, elements that can be traced to rituals tunes and which contain unexpected references to traditional ballads, Cossack laments and historical *dumy*. Sonevytsky's signature was his ability to develop fresh harmonic progressions that did not overshadow frequently introverted melodic patterns. Aware of the challenges faced by composers working in the realm of ethnic or traditional music—the repetition and copying not only of folk motives and melodies, but also structural segments—Sonevytsky brought traditional music to a contemporary stylistic context that often served as a basis for contrasting development within a particular piece. These principles were discernible in his Liturgy, in which he utilized polyphonic elements combined with a traditional melodic development associated with secondary lines (*pidholoskova faktura*) that either correlated with or was juxtaposed to the main theme. The composer switched freely from polyphonic to homophonic textures depending on the nature of the theme; he used variation development in the context of harmonic progression, diatonic or chromatic. Even though the liturgy as a genre imposed certain rules and a traditional framework on the composer, Sonevytsky blended psalm-like cadences, typical *duma* augmentation of the melodic intervals and a multi-linear texture associated with folk songs, with classical elements such as fugato, canon and fugue. Sonevytsky combined melodic development with *recitativo* that alluded to the recitation of bandura players, with elaborate ornamentation of the melodic line on sustained chords, often based upon the perfect fifth and a bourdon type of accompaniment.

Another work that belongs to the music from the church tradition is his *Panakhyda* (Requiem). The Liturgy and *Panakhyda* form a sort of symbolic framework of Sonevtysky's work. They are related not only in subject and G-minor key, but also in more profound elements, such as the selection of choral technique and allusion to traditional genres, such as the *duma*, Hutsul folk

tunes from Galicia and in their structural composition. The Liturgy and *Panakhya* can be performed as a unit of interrelated parts, or can be divided into separate parts in concert presentation. This division does not disrupt the perception of these compositions as a unified multi-structural whole in the context of liturgical rite.

Writing music to canonical texts always presents a challenge to a composer, especially if the piece serves a dual purpose, presentation on stage and performance in a liturgical context. Sonevytsky combined psalm-like melodic contours with folk tunes throughout. Keeping in mind that these compositions were to be performed in a church setting, Sonevytsky intentionally avoided technically difficult elements, so that both professional and amateur choirs could perform the Liturgy and *Panakhya*. This approach also reveals an important feature of his style: simplicity and elegance. Sonevytsky paid special attention to the colour of the choral texture. He thought melodically, every choral line was independent but subordinate to the overall harmonic structure. His compositions were amenable to varying interpretations by the performer. One of the most important examples was the cycle *Canti Spirituali* (Spiritual Songs).

The songs, based upon traditional religious texts, are composed for mixed chorus and soprano or tenor soloist, with piano or chamber orchestra accompaniment. The cycle can be performed either on the concert stage or in a sacral context, although originally Sonevtysky had simply been working on a fifteen-part cycle unified by the idea of the spiritual expression of human feeling. The parts are held together by an inner lyricism stemming from Romanticism, and allying structural and melodic development traceable to Ukrainian traditional music. Sonvetysky combined these elements to enhance the philosophical idea with a warm and personal touch. According to musicologists<sup>13</sup> the most powerful parts are “Bohorodytse Divo,” “Pid tvoiu mylist” (Under your protection), “Stradal'na maty” (Suffering mother) and “Alyluya.”<sup>14</sup> The choral parts feature polyphony and harmony typical of the Ukrainian choral tradition.

Another work of religious music consists of three Davidic Psalms, based upon Psalm 136 (137), “Nad vavylons'kymy rikamy” (Upon the rivers of Babylon), Psalm 149 (Sing to the Lord a new song) for bass-baritone and chorus, with orchestral or piano accompaniment and Psalm 112 (113,

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<sup>13</sup> Stefaniia Pavlyshyn, *Ihor Sonevyts'kyi*, p. 26.

<sup>14</sup> Soprano Lilea Wolanska made the first recording and gave the first performance of this cycle in Ukraine in 1991-93.

Praise the Lord, ye children) for mixed chorus with orchestra or piano accompaniment. These compositions were completed in 1971 and a second revision of Psalm 136 (137) was made in 1991. The last is the most interesting composition in this genre. Sonevytsky subordinated the music to the flow of the text and at the same time developed a circular structure through repetition and melodic refrains. Harmonic progression, juxtaposition of major-minor chords (so-called plagal cadences), canonic and *stretto* imitation and the polyphonic development of the multilinear choral texture enhance the emotional aspect of the composition and the introverted nature of the text. The lyricism of “Nad vavylons'kymy rikamy” blends a non-traditional compositional structure—a combination of rondo-variation form—with chant-like, almost static choral parts. The orchestral part also reflects the overall nature of the work. Sonevytsky’s transparent selection of the instruments in lyrical and solo episodes is juxtaposed with the full texture of the orchestral score, including a brass section (four French horns, three trombones), plus harp and percussion sections with bells. The timbral balance enhances and facilitates the development of this composition.

Sonevytsky dedicated less attention to instrumental music. There are a few compositions for wind instruments with piano and percussion<sup>15</sup> and an Intermezzo for cello with piano accompaniment (1992). His music for piano, excepting the Piano Concerto in G Major<sup>16</sup> had been written primarily for instructive purposes.

Art songs were one of Sonevytsky’s favorite genres, in which he revealed his greatest talent. He composed more than thirty solo art songs for different voice types. The basis for his music in this genre was the Ukrainian art song, or as it is often called, the “urban romance.” The relationship between traditional vocal music, especially that associated with the western Ukrainian tradition, and classical examples of this genre created by Mykola Lysenko, Yakiv Yatsynevych, Anatoly Kos-Anatolsky and Stanyslav Liudkevych are evident in Sonevytsky’s works. His main medium was not instrumental music, but solo and choral vocal music. In the art songs he combined traditional melos with the best examples of western European music associated with the Germanic school of composition. Sonevytsky, following the trend established by Lysenko,<sup>17</sup> who

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<sup>15</sup> *Miniature I*, scored for flute, oboe, piano and percussion (1971); *Miniature II* for flute, oboe and piano (1977); Variations for flute and piano (1985).

<sup>16</sup> The concerto was composed in 1964; a second revision was made in 1994.

<sup>17</sup> Lysenko was trained as a composer in Leipzig.

had established the foundation of the Ukrainian art song, blending traditional idioms with the classical form of *lieder* developed by Franz Schubert, Robert Schumann, Richard Strauss and others. Sonevytsky's style was a reflection of this cultural milieu—formally European, but philosophically and emotionally tied to the development of Ukrainian music within multiethnic American society.

Having been exposed in his youth and later in his studies to choral music, the composer-conductor had intimate familiarity with vocal music, feeling the difference between registers, vocal and instrumental timbres, and their expressive potential. In analyzing his choral and solo compositions one can immediately detect Sonevytsky's strength in the natural flow of the vocal phrase. His ability to prepare and present the climactic point within the music sentence, along with natural breathing for soloists, gave Sonevytsky's art songs and arrangements a secure place in the vocal repertoire.

Sonevytsky called his arts songs romances, implying that they should be perceived not as sophisticated compositions, but rather as emotional and unpretentious works. Traditional and innovative elements are perceptible in his harmonic structures, as well as in tonal combinations and juxtaposition. Sonevytsky's harmonic language contains "colouristic" effects that enhance the melodic line or create a setting that fits the particular mode and tone of the lyrics. The poetic layer is very important in his vocal works. He presented the philosophical motives embedded in religious texts, the patriotic pathos in works by Evhen Malaniuk and national sentiments in Volodymyr Sosiura's poetry. The composer was so moved by the depth of Sosiura's work that he composed a cantata on the text "Liubit' Ukraïnu" (Love Ukraine). It received excellent reviews and in 1963 was honored at a competition for choral works sponsored by the Dumka Chorus of New York.<sup>18</sup>

Sonevytsky delineated his style according to the "melodic density" of poetry, which blended organically with his music. He focused on this natural parallel development not only in his music; his musicological interest also dealt with this issue. Sonevytsky presented papers, lectured and wrote articles for periodicals, newspapers and professional information bulletins on the

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<sup>18</sup> The Dumka Chorus premiered "Liubit' Ukraïnu" in March 1970 at Hunter College Concert Hall (Andrij Dobrianskyj, bass-baritone; Marta Kokolsky, soprano; Alexander Beryk, piano).

juxtaposition of poetry and music.<sup>19</sup> Over the years he emphasized repeatedly the importance of the musical-textual relationship in numerous articles, as well as reviews of vocal performances.<sup>20</sup> In 1976 he published an article on the subject titled “Sound Poetry and Synthesized Speech” in the United States Information Agency periodical.<sup>21</sup>

Sonevytsky underlined lyricism in romances set to texts by Taras Shevchenko (“Shevchenkiana” cycle), Oleksander Oles and Lesia Ukrainka, the elegance and sophistication of the lyrics of Bohdan-Ihor Antonych (the cycle *Zelena Ievangeliia* [Green gospel]), and the diverse emotional range in miniatures by Vasyl Symonenko and Mykola Voronyi.

He had been particularly attached to the poetry of Ivan Franko. One of his earliest compositions set to Franko was composed when Sonevytsky was studying at the Music Academy in Munich. In 1950 Sonevytsky composed three romances he later grouped together in the song cycle *Ziv"iiale lystia* (Withered leaves). The three songs were performed by New York City Opera artists Marta Kokolsky and George Bohachevsky at a concert dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of the poet’s death. Kokolsky performed two romances composed for the occasion at Carnegie Hall with orchestral accompaniment conducted by Alexander Bernyk.<sup>22</sup> In 1985 baritone Nicola Fabricci performed the cycle at the Music and Art Center of Greene County, New York. Sonevytsky also presented Franko’s poetry in the context of theatrical productions. In 1977 he wrote incidental music to the poem “Ivan Vyshens'kyi” for a stage production by the Ukrainian Stage Ensemble.<sup>23</sup>

Ihor Sonevytsky was the personification of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century artist. His multifaceted activities as a composer, educator, musicologist, pianist and music manager fit into the context of contemporary music making. What distinguished Sonevytsky from other composers was his transformation of traditional elements and idioms pertaining to Ukrainian folk culture into the

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<sup>19</sup> “Taras Shevchenko and Music,” presented at the Shevchenko Scientific Society in New York on 16 July 1977.

<sup>20</sup> Review of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary Dumka concert (United States Information Agency, June, 1976).

“Myroslav Skala-Staryts'kyi,” presented at the Ukrainian Free Academy of Sciences, 28 February 1971. Reviews of concerts by Volodymyr Tysowsky, bass (USIA, 12.1972); Michael Minsky, baritone (USIA, 1.1973); Renata Babak, mezzo-soprano (USIA, April, 1975); Christiana Romana Lypeckyj, mezzo-soprano (USIA, 6. 1976); Paul Plishka, bass (USIA, 1.1977).

<sup>21</sup> USIA, February 1976.

<sup>22</sup> Alexander Bernyk was chairman of the Music Department at Hunter College, New York.

<sup>23</sup> “Ivan Vyshens'kyi” was performed by Ukrainian Stage Ensemble in New York (1977), Philadelphia (1978), Cleveland (1983) and Toronto (1983).

stylistically harmonious foreground of his original compositions. His works were created without distortion of profoundly Ukrainian traits, and his unique melodism in choral and solo vocal compositions was also based upon the linear and polyphonic melodic development of Ukrainian music. At first glance his music is not difficult from a purely technical point of view, but his compositions are demanding from the point of view of interpretation. Sonevytsky stripped away artificial embellishment, leaving the essence of the music. Simplicity became the dominant facet of Sonevytsky's style. He was able to present each and every piece as a self-sustained artistic entity, whose musical development and harmonic progression enhanced the colorful palette of the melodic line and the artistic idea, presented with taste and elegance.

Ihor Sonevytsky died on 23 December 2006 in Lexington, New York. His archive was donated to the Institute of Liturgical Studies at the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv in 2010.

## List of Compositions

### Opera and Ballet

- *Zoria* (Star), one-act satirical opera, libretto by Leonid Poltava (1963; revised in 1971; second revision, 1993.)
- *Popeliushka* (Cinderella), three-act children's ballet (1966)

### Choral Music

- “Vidrodzhenets'kyi hymn” (Hymn of Rebirth), text by Anatol Kurdydyk, for *a cappella* mixed chorus, Lviv (1944)
- Liturgy (selected parts) for a cappella mixed chorus, Vienna (1945)
- “Hrim” (Thunder), text by Ivan Franko, for mixed chorus with piano accompaniment (1947-50)
- “Slukhaite, slukhaite” (Listen, listen), text by Lesia Chraplyva, for *a cappella* children's chorus (1968)
- “Ialynon'ka” (Christmas tree), text by Nykyfor Shcherbyna, for children's chorus with piano accompaniment (1968)
- “Za ridnyi kraj” (For the native land), text Roman Kupchinsky, for *a cappella* mixed chorus (1968)
- “To nichoho” (It means nothing), text by Bohdan Bora, for *a cappella* male chorus (1968)
- Psalm 112 (113), for mixed chorus with piano or orchestral accompaniment (1971)
- Psalm 149, for bass-baritone and mixed chorus, with piano or orchestral accompaniment (1971)
- “Slaven” (Glory), text by Ihor Sonevytsky, for a cappella mixed chorus (1970s)

- “Liubit' Ukraïnu” (Love Ukraine), cantata, text by Volodymyr Sosiura, for soprano, baritone, mixed chorus and orchestra, Ukrainian Music Institute, New York (1961; second edition, 1983)
- “Iunats'ka-tysiacholitnia” (Youth-millennium song), text by Leonid Poltava, for youth chorus with piano accompaniment (1986)
- “Koliadka” (Carol), text by Bohdan-Ihor Antonych, for youth chorus with piano accompaniment (1987)
- *Canti Spirituali* (15 parts) for soprano and mixed chorus with piano accompaniment (1987)<sup>24</sup>
- Four Arrangements of Folk Songs, for *a cappella* mixed and women choruses (1988)
- Liturgy in G minor, for bass and *a cappella* mixed chorus (1990)
- “Khrystos voskres” (Christ is risen), for soprano and *a cappella* mixed chorus
- “Dumy moi” (My thoughts), text by Taras Shevchenko, for baritone and mixed chorus with piano or orchestral accompaniment (1971; second revision, 1992)
- *Panakhya* (Requiem), for bass-baritone and *a cappella* mixed chorus (1992)

### **Art Songs for Solo Voice and Piano**

- “Bohorodytse Divo” (Virgin Mother of God), for soprano (1947)
- “Khoch ty ne budesh kvitkoïu tsvisty” (Though you will not blossom), text by Ivan Franko, for baritone (1953)
- “Tvoï ochi” (Your eyes), text by Ivan Franko, for baritone (1954)
- “Neperekhidnym murom” (Impassable wall), text by Ivan Franko, for baritone (1955)<sup>25</sup>
- “Ostannia osin” (The last autumn), text by Bohdan Krawciw, for tenor (1957)

<sup>24</sup> Liturgy in G minor, *Panakhya*, *Canti Spirituali* and “Upon the rivers of Babylon” published in: *Dukhovni tvory Ihoria Sonevyts'koho* [Religious works by Ihor Sonevtsky], Lviv: Union of Ukrainian Composers, 1999.

<sup>25</sup> These three romances to texts by Ivan Franko were published as a cycle under the title *Ziv'iale lystia* [Withered leaves], New York: Ukrainian Music Foundation, 1985



- “Serenada” (Serenade), text by Mykola Voronyi, for tenor (1957)
- “Kolysanka” (Lullaby), text by Oksana Laturynska, for soprano (1962)
- “Vechirnia hodyna” (Evening hour), text by Lesia Ukrainka, for mezzo-soprano (1964)
- “Ia chuiu pisniu” (I hear a song), text by Dmytro Zahul, for soprano (1964)
- “Znov pryide chas” (The time will come again), text by Ivan Franko, for soprano (1966)
- “Na verkhakh” (On the summits), text by Ostap Lytsky, for soprano (1966)
- “Nekhai i tak” (So be it), text by Ivan Franko, for soprano (1966)
- “Kolysanka” (Lullaby), text by Maik Yohansen, for soprano (1967)
- “Oi, rozderly nas (Duma)” (They tore us apart [Duma]), text by Vasyl Pachovsky, for baritone (1967)
- “Ukraïni” (For Ukraine), text by Vasyl Symonenko, for baritone (1968)
- “Nad Atlantykom” (Above the Atlantic), text by Evhen Malaniuk, for baritone (1968)
- “Vesil'na” (Wedding song), text by Bohdan-Ihor Antonych, for soprano (1968)
- “Vzhe den' zdaiets'ia syvym i bezsylym” (The day seems gray and powerless), text by Vasyl Symonenko, for baritone (1968)
- The Lord’s Prayer, for bass (1969)
- “Zmiia khatu zapalyla” (The dragon set the house aflame), text by Taras Shevchenko, for mezzo-soprano (1970)
- “Kolyskova” (Lullaby), from the poem “Sova” (Owl), text by Taras Shevchenko, for mezzo-soprano (1970)
- “Bohynia stepova” (The goddess of the steppe), text by Bohdan Mazepa, for baritone (1974)
- “De zaraz vy, katy moho narodu?” (Where are you now, tormentors of my people?), text by Vasyl Symonenko, for baritone (1977)
- “Molytva” (Prayer), text by Taras Shevchenko, for soprano (1981)

- “Zapovit” (Testament), text by Taras Shevchenko, for baritone (1986)
- “Chy tak chy ne tak” (Neither this nor that), text by Taras Shevchenko, for baritone (1986)
- “Iakby meni lykha” (If ill-fated), text by Taras Shevchenko, for baritone (1986)
- Psalm XII: “Chy ty mene, Bozhe mylyi, navik zabuvaiesh?” (Have you forsaken me forever, dear God?), text by Taras Shevchenko, for baritone (1987)
- Psalm XLIII: “Bozhe, nashymy ushyma” (We have heard, O God, with our ears), text by Taras Shevchenko, for baritone (1987)
- “Shumliat' za viknamy mashyny” (The noisy traffic outside), text by Volodymyr Sosiura, for soprano (1987)
- “Divchyno, khmeliu” (O girl), text by Bohdan-Ihor Antonych, for soprano (1989)
- “Vesil'na nich” (Wedding night), text by Bohdan-Ihor Antonych, for soprano (1989)
- “Do pisni (Na dorohu daleku)” (To a song [For a long journey]), text by Bohdan Krawciw, for soprano (1990)
- “Tvii usmikh” (Your smile), text by Bohdan-Ihor Antonych, for soprano (1991)
- “Zaspiv” (Refrain), text by Bohdan Lepky, for soprano (1992)
- “Prysviata” (Dedication), text by Volodymyr Sosiura, for soprano (1992)
- “Ty ne pryishla v vechirni chas” (You did not come in evening), text by Oleksandr Oles, for soprano (1992)
- “Chorna kura” (Black hen), folksong arrangement for baritone (1958)
- “Ked' my pryishla karta” (When my card arrived), folksong arrangement for baritone (1959)
- “Ne plach, Rakhyle” (Weep not, Rachel), for soprano (possibly 1959)

### **Works for Piano**

- “Zyma” (Winter; 1951)

- “Vesnianky-haivky” (Spring song; 1952)
- Miniatures (1955)
- Variation on a Ukrainian Song (1962)
- “Winter” (1964)
- “Guelder Rose (The movers of the field)” (1969)
- “Triptych '88” (1988)
- “Mali p"iesy” (Short pieces; 1990)
- Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in C Major (first version, 1964; revised version, 1994)

### **Chamber Music**

- *Miniature I*, for flute, oboe, percussion and piano (1971)
- *Miniature II*, for flute, oboe and piano (1977)
- Variation for Flute and Piano (1985)
- Intermezzo for Cello and Piano (1992)

### **Music for Stage Productions<sup>26</sup>**

- *Letiuchy korabel'* (The flying Dutchman), fairy tale in three parts, libretto by Anatoly Shyian (1966)
- *Teatr shevchenkovoho slova* (Theater of Shevchenko's Word): Introduction (text by Yosyp Hirniak), “Velykyi l'okh” (The great vault), “Nevol'nyk” (The captive), “Zapovit” (Testament; 1969)
- *Lisova pisnia* (Song of the forest), drama-mystery in three acts by Lesia Ukrainka (1970)

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<sup>26</sup> Sonevytsky's music for the theater was composed between 1966 and 1993 for more than 35 productions of the Ukrainian Stage Ensemble (Studiia Mystets'koho Slova) in New York.

- *Shcho posiiesh, te y pozhnesh* (What you sow you shall reap), excerpts from fables by Leonid Hlibov (1971)
- *Vin im prostyv* (He forgave them), based upon poems by Lesia Ukrainka (1971)
- Shevchenko Concert: “Hamaliia” and “Naimychka” (The servant girl; 1972)
- *Kazka staroho mlyna* (The story of the old mill), drama in four acts by Spyrydon Cherkasenko (1972)
- *U tsarstvi Okha* (In the kingdom of Okh), story in six scenes, text by Oleksa Saciuk and Volodymyr Lasowsky (1973)
- *Snedronningen* (The Snow Queen), text by Hans Christian Andersen, Ukrainian translation by V. Ivanchuk (1974)
- *Le Verre d'eau* (The Glass of Water), comedy in five acts by Eugène Scribe, Ukrainian translation by Yurii Sherekh (1976)
- *V pokloni Shevchenkovi* (Homage to Shevchenko): “Lebedyn,” “Velykyi l'okh – try dushi” (The great vault – Three souls), based upon Taras Shevchenko’s poems (1977)
- *Ivan Vyshens'kyi*, dramatized poem, text by Ivan Franko (1977)
- *Everyman*, morality play of unknown authorship, Ukrainian translation by Zenon Tarnavsky (1977)
- Shevchenko Concert: “Son” (Dream), “Subotiv,” “Velykyi l'okh (The great vault; 1978)
- *Dvenadtsat' mesiatsev* (Twelve months), text by Samuil Marshak, Ukrainian translation by Natalia Zabala (1979)
- *Chorna pantera i bilyi vedmid'* (The black panther and the white bear), drama by Volodymyr Vynnychenko (1979)
- *V pokloni Kobzarevi* (Homage to the Kobzar): “Dolia divchyny i materi” (The fate of girl and mother; anthology), “Neofity” (The neophytes), texts by Taras Shevchenko (1980)
- *Lystopadovyi den'* (A day in November), text by Ivan Kernytsky (1981)

- *Troianovi dity* (Children of Troy), dramatic poem in three acts by Natalia Zabyla (1983)
- *Triptych*: “Orfeieve chudo” (The miracle of Orpheus), “Ifiheneia v Tavrydi” (Iphigenia in Tauris), “Shcho dast' nam sylu” (What will give us strength), dramatic works by Lesia Ukrainka (1983)
- *Ivan Vyshens'kyi*, dramatized poem, text by Ivan Franko (1983)
- *V chuzhim pir"i* (In others' shoes), text by Marika Pidhirianka (1984)
- “Kazka pro maru” (Fairytale about a specter); “Mandrivka sertsia” (The heart's journey), texts by Lina Kostenko (1984)
- *Il servitore di due padroni* (Servant of Two Masters), comedy by Carlo Goldoni (1985)
- *V pokloni Kobzarevi* (Homage to the Kobzar): “Velykyi l'okh” (The great vault); “Nevol'nyk” (The captive), texts by Taras Shevchenko (1986)
- *Iaroslav Mudryi* (Yaroslav the Wise), drama by Ivan Kocherha (1988)
- *Ikonostas Ukraïny* (Iconostasis of Ukraine), text by Vira Vovk (1988)
- “Nevol'nyk” (The captive), dramatized poem; “Dumy moyi” (My thoughts), anthology, based upon poems by Taras Shevchenko (1990)
- *Patetychna sonata* (Sonata pathétique), drama by Mykola Kulish (1993)