

Zenowij Lysko

Zenowij Lysko belonged to the generation of Ukrainian musicians who worked between two world wars that laid waste to Europe. His work as a musician and scholar was neglected in the countries where he lived as an immigrant and was banned in Ukraine for decades. Only recently has his work as a musicologist become known to professionals and the general public. However, his compositions are still waiting to be presented, performed and published.

Lysko was a composer, musicologist and public figure who laid the foundation of Ukrainian musicology in the United States. He was a musician, scholar, ethnomusicologist and teacher, as well as a music critic and editor. Along with his colleagues Borys Kudryk, Paul Lviv and Myroslav Antonowycz, Lysko enhanced public knowledge of Ukrainian secular and church music. He was one of the founders of the development of Ukrainian professional music in western Ukraine and the most prominent Ukrainian musicologist in the United States.

Zenowij Lysko was born on 11 November 1895 in the village Rakobuty, Kamyanka-Strumylova county (since 1944 the Kamianka-Buzka region near Lviv) in Galicia, western Ukraine. His family was deeply interested in music and politics, and carried on Ukrainian cultural traditions, both secular and religious. His father was a member of the clergy and his mother was a well-educated woman, who helped to form her son's interest in traditional Ukrainian music, as well as classical works. In 1913, at age eighteen, Lysko completed academic gymnasium studies and entered the philosophy department of Lviv University. Expressing great interest in music, he enrolled in the Lysenko Music Institute, where he studied piano and theory from 1906 to 1914. His professor in composition and theory classes was composer Stanyslav Liudkevych, and he also took piano and accompaniment classes. His studies at the University and the Music Institute were interrupted by the outbreak of the World War I.

Drafted into the army, Lysko experienced the hardships of trench warfare. During the second year of the war, he was imprisoned by the Russian military police and sent to Volhynia, where he spent almost two years working at the Russian military administration office. The Russian Revolution of 1917 brought freedom to the prisoners.

Shortly after his liberation from the Russian camp, he decided to defend Ukraine from foreign invaders. Lysko enlisted in the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen. For almost three years as a private he was on the front line in the war against Russian Bolsheviks and Polish forces. After the battle near Brody in 1918 Lysko was captured and held as a prisoner of war in the Polish camp at Dąbie. After a peace treaty was signed in 1919, Zenowij Lysko returned to Lviv to continue his studies.

His interest in history and politics led him to study Slavics and modern history at the Lviv (Underground) Ukrainian University in 1920. He resumed his music education at the Lysenko Music Institute and also took private lessons in composition with Vasyl Barvinsky. To support himself Lysko worked as an accompanist and music arranger at the Ukrainian theatre. From 1919 until 1922 Lysko studied in Lviv, after which he moved to Prague, where he took private lessons in composition from Vítězslav Novák and harmony and counterpoint with Fedir Akimenko. Simultaneously, Lysko was studying at Charles University until 1926. Following advice he had been given in Lviv, Lysko entered more advanced classes and seminars taught by Akimenko, with whom he studied composition. His professor in musicology at the University was scholar and folklorist Zdeněk Nejedlý.

At this time Lysko became interested in the history of Ukrainian music, traditional folklore and ethnomusicology in general. He became known as a composer and serious musicologist among the musicians and colleagues who formed the intellectual core of Ukrainian émigrés in Prague, but also among professional musicians of Czechoslovakia in general. While in Prague Lysko enrolled at the State Conservatory of Czechoslovakia, where he completed his studies in the studio of Karel Boleslav Jirák in 1927.¹ In 1928 Zenowij Lysko received a doctorate at the Ukrainian Free University in Prague upon completion of his dissertation on Semen Hulak-Artemovsky's opera *Zaporozhets' za Dunaiem* (The Zaporozhian Cossack beyond the Danube).

At the time the Ukrainian community in Prague was large and consisted mainly of well-educated political immigrants. The development of their educational, artistic and musical institutions was impressive. After the Czechoslovakian government announced a special socio-financial plan to

¹ Graduated from studios of Karel Boleslav Jirák (1927) and Josef Suk (1929)

support immigrants from the former Russian Empire, Ukrainians were able to organize a number of colleges and specialized schools, including the Ukrainian Free University, Ukrainian Academy of Management, the Drahomanov Ukrainian Pedagogical Institute and the Studio of Visual Arts.² The Ukrainian intellectual community in Czechoslovakia included writers, artists, scientists and musicians. The young generation of composers who had been trained or taught in Czechoslovakia later became known as the Prague School. Besides Zenowij Lysko they included Nestor Nyzhankivsky, Mykola Kolessa, Bohdan Pyurko, Roman Sawycky, Roman Simovych, Stefania Turkewich-Lukianowicz, Hryhoriy Dyachenko, Fedir Akimenko and Fedir Steshko. More than a hundred Ukrainian musicians were active in Czechoslovakia in the interwar period, and they left the largest mark on the development of the Ukrainian cultural presence in Czechoslovakia. In addition to educational institutions, there were several theatres, musical groups, such as the Ukrainian Academic Choir, Bandura Chorus, Bandura Student Orchestra and other artistic performance organizations, which included most members of the Ukrainian community.

Zenowij Lysko became active as a composer during his years of studying and working in Prague. Between 1922 and 1929 Lysko composed music to the poem “Tryzna,” a string quartet, a suite for symphony orchestra, a piano sonata, art song cycles and arrangements of traditional tunes and melodies. Over the years some of this music was premiered in Prague, Lviv, and later in Kharkiv and Kyiv.

At one of his first concerts in Prague in 1926, Lysko and Nestor Nyzhankivsky presented art songs, arrangements of traditional melodies and instrumental music. In addition to three vocal arrangements of folk melodies, later published by *Mystetstvo* (“Four Arrangements of Ukrainian Folk Songs” for voice with piano accompaniment), Lysko presented his “Chenchyk” Fantasy Trio on Ukrainian Themes for tenor, bass and piano. The last piece was received with enthusiasm by the audience and music critics. Encouraged by the reception both by professionals and the general public, Lysko later composed two instrumental versions of this piece, the first scored for three pianos, and the second for two pianos and three violins.

² Ukrainian Free University was transferred from Vienna to Prague in 1921; Ukrainian Academy of Management was established in 1922 in Poděbrady; Drahomanov Ukrainian Pedagogical Institute was established in Prague in 1923; Studio of Visual Arts was opened in Prague in 1923.

One of Lysko's most interesting chamber compositions was his String Quartet op. 13. The first version of this piece was dated 1928.³ The performance took place in 1929 at a concert at the Prague Conservatory, along with music by Mykola Kolessa. Although Lysko had just graduated from the composition class of Josef Suk, the Quartet did not come across as a mere graduation composition. With the confidence of a mature musician, Lysko used polyphonic techniques along with imitation and counterpoint. Lysko's mentor Suk, who was present at the concert, wrote that if the work had been written for example, by Paul Hindemith, this composition would have been known all over the world. However, since it was composed by an unknown Ukrainian, it would go unnoticed. Undoubtedly, Lysko was able to present his own vision of the music, using contemporary techniques and appropriate musical recourses for consistent dramatic development within a non-traditional two-part form. The most important stylistic feature of his works in chamber music was the combination of traditional Ukrainian folk idioms, interwoven with modern compositional techniques.

A few years after his arrival in Prague, Lysko was invited to teach at the Drahomanov Ukrainian Pedagogical Institute in Prague. His teaching career there lasted from 1924 to 1929. After completing his last course with Suk in 1929, he accepted an invitation to return to Ukraine to assume a teaching position at the Kharkiv Conservatory of Music, where he worked from 1930 to 1931. Unfortunately, the rise of political repression and the professional alienation that Lysko experienced under the Soviet system made it impossible for him to continue his pedagogical work in eastern Ukraine and he returned to Stryi, near Lviv, where he became a professor and a director of the Stryi branch of the Lysenko Music Institute from 1931 to 1938.

Lysko combined his work and teaching responsibilities with musicological writings. From 1937 until the Soviet occupation in 1939 Lysko was editor-in-chief of the journal *Ukraïns'ka muzyka* and assistant director of the Music Commission of the Shevchenko Scientific Society. He was a member of the Union of Ukrainian Professional Musicians (1934-39). According to musicologist Wasyl Wytvycky, Lysko became a member of the Board and one of its most active members from the Union's founding.⁴ Lysko published articles on both secular and religious music: the contemporary music of eastern Ukraine, Ivan Lavrivsky, Vasyl Barvinsky, the formal structure

³ Another manuscript of the Quartet opus 13 survived in Lysko's archive and was dated 1953.

⁴ Wasyl Wytvytsky, "Muzychnymy shliakhamy" [On musical paths], *Suchasnist'* 1989: 53

of Ukrainian traditional melodies, Shevchenko and music, and others.⁵

In 1939 Lysko received an invitation from Liudkevych to become a faculty member at the Lviv Music Institute, which was renamed the Lviv Conservatory following the Soviet invasion. Lysko taught at the Conservatory from 1940 to 1944.

After the Second World War, Lysko lived in Germany (Mittenwald, 1946-1950; Munich, 1950-1960). While in Mittenwald he organized, directed and taught at the music school of the displaced persons camp,⁶ and became the inspector of all Ukrainian music schools in Germany. In 1960 Lysko and his wife, Eudokia,⁷ immigrated to the United States and settled in New York City, where he was appointed director of the Ukrainian Music Institute of America in 1961. He taught at the institute from 1961 until his death in 1969.

Lysko's musicological works were acknowledged in American academia and within the Ukrainian community. In 1961 he became a full member of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences and in 1963 of the Shevchenko Scientific Society.

As a composer Zenowij Lysko continued the tradition of the Ukrainian classical school of composition founded by Mykola Lysenko, Kyrylo Stetsenko and Mykola Leontovych. His knowledge of western European trends in composition in the first part of the 20th century gave him a broad view and multicultural context for his works. In his arrangements, art songs and compositions for piano, chamber orchestra, and choral works he combined both secular and religious traditional idioms from Ukrainian folk music with contemporary techniques.

Lysko successfully engaged in composition, teaching and academic work. He was interested in folk music and became an authority on Ukrainian music in the United States. In his articles for professional magazines, bio-historical studies and textbooks Lysko always emphasized the interconnection between professional and traditional music. His interest in historical musicology led him to produce works on the definition of musical idioms, terms and concepts. While in western Ukraine in 1933 he completed a music dictionary (*Muzychnyi slovnyk*, 1933), and after

⁵ These articles were published in *Ukrain's'ka muzyka*, Lviv-Stryi, 1938, vols. 1-8, and 1939, vols. 2-4

⁶ Displaced Person camps were organized in Germany by the Allied administration after WWII.

⁷ Eudokia Lysko (née Chebanenko) was born in 1896, in the village Pishchanka, Podillia region, Ukraine.

the war, while working in Germany he published a Ukrainian musical lexicon (*Ukraïns'kyi muzychnyi leksykon*, Mittenwald, 1947). Lysko wrote many articles in Ukrainian, American and German music magazines such as *Ukraïns'ka muzyka* (Ukrainian music), *Novi shliakhy* (New paths), *Nasha kul'tura* (Our culture), *Die Musik* (Music), *Ukraïns'kyi samostiinyk* (Ukrainian independentist) and others. According to musicologist Roman Sawycky, Lysko's greatest contribution to the study of Ukrainian music was his work as a scholar on the subject of traditional music and as editor of collections of art music, traditional tunes and arrangements. In his approach toward the development and preservation of traditional tunes, Lysko followed the methods developed by Ilmari Krohn, Béla Bartók and Filiaret Kolessa.

Lysko compiled arrangements of Ukrainian songs for chorus⁸ and a collection of religious works by Alexander Koshetz.⁹ From 1947 to 1961 he worked on collecting, analyzing and systematizing more than fourteen hundred Ukrainian folk songs, which were eventually published in the 10-volume *Ukraïns'ki narodni melodii* (Ukrainian folk melodies).¹⁰ To this day this work is one of the most extensive collections of the traditional tunes from all of eastern Europe.

Lysko died in New York on 3 June 1969.

His archive is spread over several countries and housed in separate locations. One part of the archive was bequeathed to the library of the Ukrainian Institute at Harvard University. American musicologist Roman Sawycky published a notography and bibliography of Zenowij Lysko's archive in 1995.¹¹ Before his emigration Lysko made copies of his compositions and gave them to Fedir Steshko who placed this part of the collection in the Museum of Liberation in Prague; the originals had been housed at the Taras Shevchenko Scientific Society in Lviv, where they vanished, probably during or after the WWII. At present most of the materials related to composer's life and works are in the Lysko Collection.

⁸ *Spivanyk Chervonoï kalyny* (Songbook of the red viburnum) was prepared in Ukraine and published in Lviv in 1937.

⁹ The collection was published in New York in 1970.

¹⁰ This fundamental work, consisting of 1,447 Ukrainian folk tunes, is among the most extensive collections of the traditional melodies in the world and was published over a period of thirty years in New York and Toronto (1964-1994).

¹¹ Roman Sawycky. *Tvorchist' Zinoviia Lys'ka: Norohrafiia-Dyskohrafiia-Bibliohrafiia* [The work of Zenowij Lysko: Notography, discography, bibliography]. Cranford, NJ: Klyuchi Publisher, 1995.

The Lysko Collection is divided into five series: biographical material (1925-1928, 1952-1975); correspondence (1946-1977); music (1919-1953); writings (1933-1971); and photographs (1913-1976). The collection as a whole provides insights into post-World War II émigré life among Ukrainians in Europe, Canada, and the United States. More specifically, it reveals the experiences and problems Ukrainian composers and musicologists faced working outside Ukraine.

The first series of the collection is comprised of biographical material including: an autobiographical sketch, encyclopedic entries, a comprehensive article about Lysko by Roman Sawycky, concert programs in which Lysko participated, and diplomas issued to Lysko and his wife, Eudokia.

The second series primarily contains correspondence to Lysko, with some addressed to his wife following his death. The correspondence is arranged alphabetically. All the letters were written to Lysko after he had emigrated to Germany in 1946 and then the United States in 1960. Lysko corresponded with a number of noted Ukrainian composers, conductors, musicologists and musicians including Myroslav Antonowycz, Michael Hayvoronsky, Andrij Hnatyschyn, Hryhory Kystasty, Paul Macenko, Oleksander Nosalevych, Roman Prydatkevych, Roman Sawycky, Myroslav Skala-Starytsky, Ihor Sonevych, Volodymyr Stone-Baltarowicz, Ievhen Tsehelsky, Ievhen Tsymbalysty, Ivan Vovk, Aristide Wirsta and Wasyl Wytwycky.

Much of the correspondence pertains to Lysko's work on his compilation *Ukrains'ki narodni melodiï* (New York-Toronto, 1964-1994); his volume of religious works by Alexander Koshetz (New York, 1970); his work for the *Entsyklopediia ukraïnoznavstva* (Encyclopedia of Ukrainian studies); and his article submissions to journals such as *Visti, Kyiv, Terem, Arka, Ovyd*, and *Shliakh peremohy*. In addition, there are letters addressed to Lysko asking him either for permission to perform his compositions, assistance in arranging music, or advice in answering specific questions about Ukrainian music. Some of the more interesting letters, such as those written by Vasyl Dzul and Antin Postolovsky, pertain to Ukrainian village traditions with regard to music and dance. Other interesting letters include those by artist Lev Getz who reminisces about his friendship with Lysko since their days together at the Polish concentration camp in

Dąbie. Getz, as well as several other correspondents, tried to update Lysko about the whereabouts of his own music and manuscripts written prior to the Second World War, but these letters indicate that this unpublished archival material may have been lost.

The third series consists of musical scores, in published and manuscript form. They are arranged alphabetically by title. Most, but not all, of the compositions are by Lysko. These include instrumental and piano works, as well as works for chorus and arrangements of Ukrainian folk songs.

The fourth series comprises Lysko's writings arranged alphabetically by title. These are either in manuscript or published form. His writings include articles and books about the history of Ukrainian music, biographical studies on Ukrainian composers, textbooks, lectures and reviews. This series also contains a few articles about Lysko, as well as typescripts written by his wife of the words for all the songs in *Ukrains'ki narodni melodiï*.

The last series in the Lysko Collection is composed of photographs. The photographs document a large part of Lysko's life, including his time spent in Lviv, Prague, Rakobuty, Stryi, Mittenwald and Munich. There are also photographs of the Lysenko Music Institute, the Ukrainian Republican Cappella, and the State Conservatory of Czechoslovakia. Some of the photographs also relate to Eudokia Lysko's work with the Ukrainian Women's Alliance in Germany, which helped run Ukrainian schools at DP camps. The photographs, besides providing documentation of important people, places and organizations, are also a good resource for studying Ukrainian folk costumes and the uniforms of the Sich Riflemen.

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