

Roman Prydatkevych

The music of composer Roman Prydatkevych was praised by Walter Damrosch, Albert Stoessel, Serge Koussevitzky, Eugene Ormandy, Rudolf Ganz, Robert Whitney and Leopold Stokowski. His *Orchestral Suite* was performed by Howard Hanson and the Rochester Symphony Orchestra and by Walter Poole and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. His symphonic poem *From the Mountains and the Plains* was conducted on 31 January 1951 in Denver by Leopold Stokowski, who praised Prydatkevych as a composer of high caliber. Ten years earlier the *First Sonata for Violin and Piano* was performed at New York's Town Hall.¹ Roman Prydatkevych was the author of two Ukrainian Rhapsodies, a piano trio, three symphonies, three violin sonatas, over 20 art songs and numerous arrangements for voice, violin and piano.

In addition, Roman Prydatkevych was a violin virtuoso. His violin, made in 1774 by Giovanni Battista Guadagnini, was compared by music critics to a sensitive, elegant voice. Following his successful North American debut in 1930 at New York's Town Hall, his recitals were received with acclaim in the principal cities of the United States, including several recitals in New York (at the Town Hall, Carnegie Hall and Brooklyn Academy of Music), at Chicago's Kimball Hall, the Detroit Art Institute and many colleges and universities. He also toured Canada several times and was praised by many critics across the United States, Canada and Europe for his talent and technical superiority. He was included in Joseph S. Roucek's *Slavonic Encyclopedia* and was acknowledged in J. Morris Jones' article in a U.S. Office of Education booklet among "leading violin players of world-wide fame."²

His recitals, presentations of new compositions and lectures were distinguished by interesting programs, often enriched by Ukrainian folkloric material and musical motifs from his adopted western Kentucky. Composer Alexander Koshetz stated that Prydatkevych had made an invaluable contribution to the musical literature for violin, while ethnomusicologist and scholar Zenowij Lysko regarded Prydatkevych as one of the most important Ukrainian composers. Roman Prydatkevych aimed to reflect his native music in his compositions. Their delineated structure never overwhelmed the romanticism and other elements from traditional Slavic music,

¹ The performance was held in 1941, accompanied by the pianist Paolo Gallico.

² Morris J. Jones. *Americans All, Immigrants All*. U.S. Office of Education, 1938.

which gave a special meaning to his compositions. Since Prydatkevych was a concert violinist as well as a composer, he was able to present his music in different venues for various listeners and to introduce Ukrainian music culture to a wide spectrum of American audiences.

Roman Volodyslav Prydatkevych was born in Żywiec, Poland, on 1 June 1895, and the following year his family moved to Ukraine, where they settled in the town of Yavoriv near Lviv. His father Pavlo was a well-known painter and sculptor, and his mother Eloise belonged to an old Galician family. Roman studied for several years at the Taras Shevchenko Ukrainian School and after completion of the preliminary courses transferred to the State (Ukrainian) Academic Gymnasium in Lviv. While in Lviv Prydatkevych became interested in music and composition. He was accepted on full scholarship at the Lysenko Music Institute, where he studied violin with Yelyzaveta Shchedrovych-Hankevych and Eugene Perfetsky, theory with Filiaret Kolessa and harmony and counterpoint with Stanyslav Liudkevych.

Roman Prydatkevych became well-known among amateur and professional musicians in western Ukraine. Among numerous solo recitals and performances with chamber orchestra covered by the press, the most impressive were performances with the First Ukrainian String Quartet, which he led. One of the earliest moments of recognition of his achievements came from Liudkevych, who noted his talent in a review of a jubilee concert dedicated to the memory of writer Ivan Franko.³ The concert took place on 12 May 1912 in Lviv and was organized by a progressive group of Ukrainian students. At the time it was considered a political manifestation of Ukrainian identity in addition to being a musical performance.⁴

After completion of his courses and graduation exams at the Gymnasium, Prydatkevych was accepted to the Vienna Music Academy on a full scholarship from the Ministry of Education. During his studies there from 1913 to 1915 he took classes in music history with Eusebius Mandyczewski, composition with Joseph Marx, and violin with Julius Stwertka and Otakar Ševčík. Prydatkevych also studied law at the University of Vienna while continuing his music studies. During the second year of his studies he took courses at the Institute of Slavic Studies

³ The review of the concert and the event was published in the newspaper *Dilo*, May 1912.

⁴ At that time the western part of Ukraine was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and was later under Polish domination. The manifestation of any form of the Ukrainian identity was regarded as opposition to the political agenda enforced by the state.

with Milan Rešetar. His interest in different areas gave Prydatkevych a distinctive element of ethnic identity and added a cultural context to his compositions.

In March 1915 Prydatkevych was drafted into the Austrian army. He completed his service on the Italian front as a second lieutenant. After the dissolution of the Russian Empire in October 1917 and the rise of the national movements and the subsequent proclamation of Ukrainian independence, Prydatkevych joined the Third Division of the Ukrainian Galician Army in November 1918 as a superintendent of munitions and supply. Soon after he was transferred to assist composer Kyrylo Stetsenko, who was Chief of Music Affairs in the Ukrainian armed forces. Prydatkevych was engaged in the development of music education and performance, including the organization of new choirs and orchestras. During this period he also composed and performed. In Kamianets Podilsky, where the army was headquartered, Prydatkevych performed with pianist Oksana Biretska and composer Nestor Nyzhankivsky. He organized concerts for different audiences, including army officers, students and the general public. Prydatkevych became a prominent figure in Ukrainian cultural life and in January 1919 he was invited to teach at the Institute of Public Education in Odesa. In January 1920 the Institute's director Roman Volkov appointed Prydatkevych to teach music theory, conducting and choral literature. At the same time Prydatkevych became an assistant professor at the Odesa Theatrical Institute in the music department chaired by Mykhailo Slabchenko. Even though these years were very productive for Prydatkevych as a teacher and composer, and saw the beginning of his marriage to his wife Lydia Klopotovska, the political oppression and the dominance of Communist ideology became more and more of a constraint. His past as an officer in the Ukrainian Galician Army, which the Soviets regarded as an insurgent force, threatened his life, and in 1922, using his previous status in the Austrian army, he was taken by an Austrian mission by boat to Trieste and subsequently to Vienna. There he began taking private violin lesson with Hugo Gottesman, and after an extensive concert tour of Galicia, Prydatkevych left for Germany, where he studied violin, composition and musicology. He was accepted to Berlin's Hochschule für Musik, where he studied violin with Carl Flesch, as well as comparative musicology and composition. When the political situation in Germany changed, Prydatkevych decided to leave Europe, and in the winter of 1923 he settled in New York.

There he received a warm welcome from the Ukrainian community and his appearances as a violinist were frequent. In 1923 he was invited to perform at the WJZ station of the Radio Corporation of America (RCA), later called the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), which brought him nationwide recognition, and subsequently he was invited to join various orchestras. However, Prydatkevych decided to concentrate on musical composition and his career as a solo concert violinist and educator. In September 1924, with the support of several Ukrainian organizations, Prydatkevych and composer Michael Hayvoronsky organized the Ukrainian Conservatory of Music in New York. Prydatkevych made great efforts to develop curriculum and select highly qualified faculty for the Conservatory to make it among the best schools of its type in the country. Sadly, owing mainly to the financial constraints brought about by the Great Depression, the Conservatory of Music closed in the latter 1930s.

During the Depression, Prydatkevych organized the Society of Friends of Ukrainian Music,⁵ modeled after the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna, to promote Ukrainian instrumental, vocal and chamber music among the general public. The program presented an extensive range of Ukrainian music representing different periods, styles and genres.

In 1926 he became a graduate student of Columbia University studying violin, composition and orchestration. In 1927 he received a full scholarship to the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, where he took classes with professor Robert O'Connor Morris, and in 1929 he was appointed a professor of upper strings and violin at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia and a year later at the College of Music in New York. On 29 April 1929 Prydatkevych made his debut at the New York Town Hall to positive reviews. In 1930 he organized the Ukrainian Trio with soprano Maria Hrebenetska and pianist Olha Tkachuk. It remained active for more than thirty years.

Touring extensively with solo and chamber music concerts Prydatkevych became well-known among musicians, composers and music critics. Among these was orchestra conductor Walter Damrosch, who was instrumental in facilitating a scholarship from the G. Schirmer publishing company to enable Prydatkevych to study music theory at the Julliard School of Music. His interest in chamber and orchestral music led to a position at the American Chamber Orchestra, where Prydatkevych was a conductor for several years. The orchestra was affiliated with

⁵ The Executive Committee included more than one hundred members of Ukrainian heritage from all over the world.

WHYC Radio in New York. Many compositions were presented on the airwaves for the first time under Prydatkevych's direction, which gave him an opportunity to expose a large audience to contemporary music.

Prydatkevych included his own compositions in his concert programs. At his solo concert on 9 November 9 1941 at New York's Town Hall he presented his Quartet for Strings, his First Symphony, subtitled "Ukrainian Liberation," the Ukrainian Orchestral Suite, First Violin Sonata and other compositions.

His arrangements of Ukrainian music and paraphrases of tunes composed by other Ukrainian composers gained popularity in the United States and Canada. His Canadian concert tour, facilitated by composer and choral conductor Alexander Koshetz, was successful not only artistically but also financially, which allowed Prydatkevych to acquire an 18th-century violin made in Turin by Giovanni Battista Guadagnini. The first Canadian tour in 1947 focused on Ukrainian and Western classical music.⁶ The program of the second tour included 14 concerts, mainly oriented at introducing Ukrainian music to a general Canadian public largely unfamiliar with it. He composed several pieces for these concerts, including Violin Sonata no. 2, Violin Sonata no. 3, Ukrainian Rhapsody no. 2, "Wedding" (1947), as well as a set of Arrangements of American Folk Songs and Traditional Melodies for Solo Violin. In addition to pieces composed and performed by Prydatkevych, an extensive part of the program included arrangements and instrumental music by his colleagues who lived in North America, such as Alexander Koshetz, Michael Hayvoronsky and Paul Pecheniha-Ouglitzky.

After the end of the World War II Prydatkevych was invited to undertake a project sponsored by the U.S. government to perform at veterans' hospitals, as well as communities that had been affected by the war. This project included a six-month concert tour across the United States in 1945-46. Following the tour, from October 1946 until his retirement in 1965, Prydatkevych served as a professor at Murray State University of Kentucky, where he taught musicology, music history and violin. He was also a visiting professor at Kentucky Wesleyan College from 1967 to 1971.

⁶ The concert tour of 1947 included music for violin and piano, played by Prydatkevych and accompanied by Ivan Melnyk.

Throughout his musical career Prydatkevych continued formal studies of the main trends in contemporary music, in theory, history and performance, the history of American music and the vocal music of Renaissance Italy. He completed a master's degree in composition from the University of Minnesota in 1953, studied conducting at the Eastman School of Music, and received a doctorate in musicology from the Ukrainian Free University in 1967.

As a performer, educator and composer, Prydatkevych was interested in introducing traditional Ukrainian music to the general public. He explored different genres, ranging from the ballad (*dumy*) and dance music such as the *kolomyika*, to more concert-oriented genres such as the rhapsody and sonata. He often combined pieces from different genres in one concert or one *opus*. A program might include his Prelude on a Hymn to Our Lady of Kamianka, which was a free paraphrase of a sacred hymn sung annually in the western Ukrainian town of Kamianka Strumilova, followed by his Second Sonata (Prelude, Chorale and Fugue).

Prydatkevych wrote the notes to the first composition:

A passionate scream of the fantastic imagination cuts through apocalyptic spaces. Hell is opening its portals. Ethereal singing of angels and souls of human beings appear before their Creator for the Last Judgment. Evil spirits try to draw the souls down into the open abyss of the kingdom of torture and suffering. There is heard a chorale of salvation. Its sweetness supports the confidence of creatures. It is promising redemption. The struggle in the name of eternal righteousness and happiness continues. With the singing of the angels the human soul nears the spheres of heaven. There is once more the passionate scream and the sweet, heavenly melody of bliss triumphing.

Prydatkevych often used paraphrases on themes by other composers, such as a *Kolomyika* by Michael Hayvoronsky, a paraphrase arrangement of a well-known village dance from western Ukraine, usually a song of gossip with improvised words. It was very common for Prydatkevych to include traditional folk tunes in his concerts. A surviving program with his annotations and comments shows that it included pieces based on Ukrainian folk songs:

- “A Song of America” by Vasyl Barvinsky/Roman Prydatkevych, a hymnal-like piece of gratitude and admiration to the countries of the new world, expressed by Ukrainian immigrants.
- “Longing” by Mykola Lysenko/Prydatkevych, a street song collected from old Zaporozhian Cossacks in which a young boy longs for the mysterious future. The music is a reflection of the uncertainty as to what fate holds in store for him, perhaps he may soon die.
- “A Nostalgic Mood” by Zenowij Lysko/Prydatkevych. Thorns cover the paths where a maiden once walked.
- “A Lament” by Alexander Koshetz/Prydatkevych. A very characteristic Ukrainian folk song depicting in a bright manner the complaints of a young wife against her nagging mother-in-law, which the sight of her loving husband dispels like the sun does the clouds.
- “Piece on Ukrainian Folk Song” by Mykhailo Verykivsky/Prydatkevych. A sustained, tranquil melody expresses quiet optimism and cheerful hope.
- “Hutsulka” by Roman Prydatkevych. A light dance expressing the care-free, merry but lonely lives of young boys in a wild, mountainous country.
- “Song of the Shepherd” (Chaban) by Prydatkevych. A young shepherd tending his sheep turns a deaf ear to the entreaties of his mother that he change to farming, for says he, “Who would gather in my harvest when I go off to war?” He continues with his shepherding, playing a plaintive melody on his flute.
- “A Wedding Sketch” by Prydatkevych. Wedding ceremonies in the form of traditional songs by bridesmaids and matrons of honour. The matrons sing to the bride, extolling her merits, while the bridesmaids sing in another part of the house. During the final ceremony of arranging the bride's hair, the song becomes burdened with sorrow and melancholy. To ease the tension, the musicians play a lively dance.
- Ukrainian Rhapsody (Kobzar idiom) Duma – A Song – Dances. “Kobzars are professional bards traveling from village to village with a repertoire of *dumas*, songs and dances. A *duma* is a vocal recitation accompanied by the singer himself, playing the bandura—a lute-like, many-stringed instrument. The themes of *dumas* are historic events, particularly wars during XVI and XVII centuries with the Tartars and Turks, with moralizing element predominating. This *duma* is easily followed by the representation of

raging winds over the turbulent Black Sea, in which a drowning Cossack recalls, as though in a song, his parents' voices begging him not to leave his native home. But with the carelessness of youth he had disregarded their warnings. The waves engulf him. To suggest his rescue, various dances of brilliant character are represented.

Roman Prydatkevych chose to become a music educator in a broad sense, which required talent, professionalism and dedication, and also energy, stamina and persuasion. His legacy includes his compositions and numerous solo concerts, and also his lectures and writings. As a musicologist Prydatkevych focused on three subjects: the overall development of world music, Ukrainian traditional music and the practical implementation of some theoretical aspects in violin music. In his works Prydatkevych focused on the problem of transcription and interpretation of Classical and Baroque music for string instruments. His interest in world music was a reflection of his perception of music culture and his interest in the development of Ukrainian music in the context of contemporary music culture in the Western Hemisphere.

He was one of the first musicians in the United States to write a history of Ukrainian music in English. It was published in abbreviated form in the information bulletin for the Pan-Slavic Choral Festival in Chicago in 1935. After receiving positive responses to this work, and mindful of the gap in American musicology where Ukrainian music culture was absent or substituted with Russian music, Prydatkevych undertook his next musicological project, a book about Ukrainian folk instruments. His interest in traditional and classical Ukrainian music led him to new research on the interrelationship between music and poetry. He wrote two works on the subject, the first on Taras Shevchenko in the history of Ukrainian and European music of the 19th century, and the second the role of Ivan Franko in the development of Ukrainian music.⁷

Roman Prydatkevych died in Owensboro, Kentucky, on 17 November 1980. His grandson, violist and conductor Theodore Kuchar, was chief conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine from 1994 to 1999.⁸

⁷ This work was published in *Zapysky NTSh*, [Notes of the Shevchenko Scientific Society] in 1962.

⁸ With the orchestra Kuchar recorded the complete symphonies of Borys Lyatoshynsky and three symphonies by Yevhen Stankovych. Other recordings in their joint discography include the complete symphonies of Sergei Prokofiev and works by 20th-century American composers.

List of Works

Works for the Symphonic and Chamber Orchestra

- Symphony no. 1, “Ukrainian Liberation,” dedicated to the memory of Professor Mykhailo Slabchenko (1933-37)⁹

1. Liberation Movement
2. From the Mountains and the Plains
3. Idyllic
4. Youth
5. Struggle

- Symphony no. 2, “Topolia” (Poplar Tree), to a poem by Taras Shevchenko (1940-45)
- Symphony no. 3, “West Kentucky” (1950-53)¹⁰
- Symphony no. 4 “Hetman Mazepa” (unfinished)¹¹
- String Quartet, in E flat Major (1937-39)

Con moto, Moderato

Largo (Fugue)

Allegro non troppo

- Ukrainian Suite for Chamber Orchestra and Harp (1937-39)¹²

Introduction

Ceremonial Dance

⁹ The first performance of the first movement took place in Denver, Colorado, under conductor Leopold Stokowski, January 1951.

¹⁰ The first performance in Morey, Kentucky, conductor Richard Farrell.

¹¹ The first movement was performed by Frederic Fennell in Rochester, NY, 1959.

¹² The first performance took place in Rochester, NY, under conductor Howard Hans in 1938.

Cossack Song

Bucolic Scene and the Pipe

- First Ukrainian Rhapsody for Violin and Orchestra; *Duma*, Cossack Song, Dances
- Orchestral music to the film *Marusia* (1938)

For Chorus and Orchestra

- *David's Song*, cantata for chorus and orchestra to a poem by Christopher Smart (1926)
- Psalm CXVII, five-part choir *a cappella* (1928-29)
- Symphonic Cantata *Mazepa's Great Anniversary* to a text by Uliana Kravchenko, for chorus soloists and the extended orchestra (partial orchestration, 1959)

For Violin and Piano

- *Song Without Words* (1911)¹³
- Prelude, dedicated to Sofia Pankevych (1914)
- Suite no. 1, for violin and piano, dedicated to Eugene Perfetsky (1929)

1. First Part [unfinished]

2. Orientale

3. Scherzo

4. Melody

- Cossack-Renaissance Suite, for violin and piano (1929)

¹³ The first performance took place in 1910 with Roman Prydatkevych, violin, and Nestor Nyzhankivsky, piano. The first review by Nyzhankivsky on this concert was published in the newspaper *Dilo* in Lviv, 1911.

Cossack Baida

Tartars

Poem (Virsha)

Cossack Netiaha

Kozachok (dance)

- Three Pieces on Ukrainian Themes, for violin, piano and soprano, (1929)¹⁴
 1. “Z buinym vitrom” (With a gusty wind)
 2. Yanichok
 3. Kozachok (folk dance)
- Podolian Suite
- Hutsul Suite
- *Daughter Suite*, dedicated to his daughter

The First Song

Crystal High

Lullaby

Goat

- Sonata no. 1 for Violin and Piano, “Carpatho-Ukrainian” (1938-40)¹⁵

Moderato

Grave

Andante

¹⁴ Published by Edward Schuberth & Co., New York-Leipzig.

¹⁵ The first performance by Prydatkevych, violin, and Paolo Gallico, piano, New York Town Hall, 1941.

Allegro

- Ukrainian Rhapsody no. 1, “Kobzar Rhapsody” (1939-40, 1942)

Duma

Cossack Song

Dances

- Sonata no. 2 for Violin and Piano (1942-43, 1947)

Prelude

Choral Hymn

Fugue

- Sonata no. 3 for Violin and Piano
- Ukrainian Rhapsody no. 2, “Wedding” (unfinished, 1947)
- Arrangements of American folk songs and traditional melodies for solo violin
- Approximately 30 arrangements of Ukrainian folk songs, dances and traditional melodies
- Arrangements and paraphrases of other composer’s works for violin and piano, solo violin, and for voice, violin and piano

Works for Piano

- Piano Sonata (unfinished, 1928)
- Eight Studies (Preludes) for Solo Piano
- Ten Preludes for Piano (1923-64)

Vocal Compositions

- St. Francis of Assisi Prayer, for bass-baritone with piano
- Art Song, to German lyrics [lost]
- Four Songs for Soprano, Violin and Piano (1930-31)
- Four Songs on Folk Motifs (1931)
 - “Hutsul's'ka koliadka” (Hutsul carol)
 - “Perepilka” (Quail)
 - “Chaika” (Seagull)
 - “Oi khodyla divchynon'ka” (The girl was walking)
- Choral Prelude and Fugue
- *Four Songs of the Atomic Era*, cycle of songs to texts by M. Kaufman for bass-baritone and piano (1958-63)
 - “Creative excitements”
 - “Eternity”
 - “Thread”
 - “Spherical”
- “Seagull,” for soprano and piano, (updated version of “Mazepa’s Song,” Podillia version, 1965)
- *Eternal Life*, two songs to the texts of St. Francis of Assisi, for baritone or tenor with piano
- *Slovo o polku Ihorevim* (The Tale of Ihor’s Campaign), to the Slavonic chronicle, ed. Vasył Pachovsky, for high voice (1939-58)

Selected Musicological Works

“Oleksandr Koshets',” *Svoboda*, 14 July 1933.

“An Outline of Ukrainian Music.” The First Pan-Slavic Singing (Choral) Festival, Chicago: United Slavic Choral Societies, 1934.

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Wasyl Wytwycky, "Persha symfoniia Romana Prydatkevycha" (The first symphony of Roman Prydatkevych), *Visti-Herald*, 5 June 1966.