

Zenoby Lawryshyn

Perhaps like no other Ukrainian-Canadian composer, Zenoby Lawryshyn focused on developing traditional styles in conjunction with innovative aspects dominant in European music in the second half of the twentieth century. His works were distinguished by this combination of contemporary tendencies with traditional means of developing musical material.

He worked primarily in choral, vocal and instrumental chamber music, but also wrote piano, chamber-vocal and symphonic music. In addition to lyrical miniatures and small vocal cycles, his oeuvre includes large forms—primarily choral and symphonic pieces.

Lawryshyn combined the poly-stylistic tendencies of contemporary music with the expressive, harmonious dominants of Ukrainian folk music. His individual composing style was most fully represented in intimate lyricism, mainly in vocal and choral genres. Nevertheless, Lawryshyn's musical style was diverse. Some of his works were dominated by elements from the vocal traditions of Neo-Romanticism, in others typical paradigms of 20th-century musical language were present. Certain compositions were a continuation of the principles of Ukrainian Romanticism, initiated by Mykola Lysenko and Stanyslav Liudkevych, and further developed in the works of Viktor Kosenko and Levko Revutsky. But a significant part of Lawryshyn's works was notable for interweaving elements of the traditional semantics inherent in Ukrainian music, modern methods of rhythmic and melodic variation, and dissonant intrusions of polytonality.

Lawryshyn was also thoroughly versed in sacred music. He was perhaps one of the few contemporary composers outside Ukraine who truly understood the liturgical choral-writing tradition. His lengthy experience as a chorus master contributed to his understanding of the specifics of choral texture. His choral works were marked by the combination of vocal melodies with polyphonic techniques in the development of musical material. At the same time, his fluent grasp of the poly-stylistic elements of modern music, including polytonal and dissonant harmonic modulations, enabled him to transform stable folk elements into an organic aesthetic and symbolic system.

Lawryshyn brought his own original voice to the multicultural collage of Canadian music. He avoided the temptation of formal experimentation. Instead, his work transformed traditional or time-tested folk music paradigms, which became the backbone of his melodic and harmonic style. Although he spent most of his life outside Ukraine, traditional and professional Ukrainian music culture was integrated organically into his worldview. His stable affiliation with the Ukrainian tradition distinguished him as a composer among his contemporaries.

Zenoby Lawryshyn was born into a priestly family on 4 June 1943 in the small village of Rudnyky in western Ukraine.¹ His father, Wasyl Lawryshyn, was a musically gifted man, who had a musical education and good vocal abilities corresponding to his clerical vocation, and his mother, Maria, at one point took piano lessons from the composer Vasyl Barvinsky.²

During the Second World War, the family left Ukraine and afterwards spent almost five years in camps for displaced persons in Germany.³ Zenoby was not yet six years of age when his family moved to Canada in 1949, settling in Toronto. Thereafter all of Lawryshyn's creative life was connected to the city.

The culture of a progressive urban center provided many opportunities for Lawryshyn's creative development. Relative tolerance for newly arrived immigrants, an official policy of multiculturalism and exposure to world folklore and the musical traditions of various ethnic groups enabled Lawryshyn to position himself as a Canadian composer and at the same time as a representative of the Ukrainian tradition. To a large extent, the intelligent and stable life of a priestly family,⁴ with an aesthetic and cultural orientation towards the Ukrainian religious and folk traditions, formed the young musician's consciousness. It is entirely possible that this combination accounted for the versatility of his works, ranging from the treatment of popular melodies of the light genre and piano miniatures, to liturgical and symphonic works.

¹ Village of Rudnyky, Mykolaiv raion, Lviv oblast

² Wasyl Lawryshyn (1900-1969) came from the village of Krasne, near Kalush, Rozhniatynsky raion, Lviv oblast. Maria Lawryshyn (1905-1988), née Bobovnyk, was born into a priestly family in the village of Hlibovychi in the Lviv region.

³ The Lawryshyn family lived in displaced persons camps in Austria and Germany from 1944 until their move to Canada in 1949.

⁴ His father was pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul parish in Scarborough, and later of St. Josaphat and St. Nicholas parishes in Toronto.

Undoubtedly, it was a driving factor in his interest in stylistic tendencies in modern, and in particular, European musical culture.

Lawryshyn received his earliest musical education at home. Realizing that talent required professional mentoring, his parents sent the young man to Kateryna Hvozdetzky's studio, and later he took private piano lessons from conductor and pianist Lev Turkevych and virtuoso pianist Lubka Kolessa. These pianists, conductors and composers, trained at the finest musical academies of Europe, gave impetus to the creative energy of the future composer.

Recalling his lessons with Lubka Kolessa, a pupil of Karol Mikuli, who in turn had studied with Fryderyk Chopin, Lawryshyn admitted: "I already knew she was a pianist of world fame. In my memory still remain the illustrations of works performed by her. That was music! Remembering those times, I repeatedly caught myself thinking, how important were my meetings with such great people as Lubka and Christina Kolessa, Mykhailo Holynsky, Vasyl Tysiak, Joseph Hoshulak, Olenka Zaklynska and Wolodymyr Kolesnyk. All of them, though not immediately, left a significant imprint on my life."⁵ This environment had a huge impact on his formation as a musician and, later, as a composer.

At the recommendation of Lubka Kolessa,⁶ Lawryshyn continued his studies at the Royal Conservatory of Music with Professor Earle Moss. At that time, Lawryshyn anticipated his professional career would be mainly in the field of performance, as a conductor and pianist, and while studying at the Conservatory, he worked as an accompanist for opera and lieder singers. Lawryshyn graduated from the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto in 1961.

As conductor and founder of the Lisova Pisnia Women's Choir, later renamed Dibrova, Lawryshyn wrote his first vocal and choral arrangements, and original compositions. The success of his choral and vocal-instrumental works, as well as a desire to improve his professional education, prompted Lawryshyn to continue his studies in France in 1965-66.

⁵ Anatolii Zhytkevych, "Do 70-richchia vid dnia narodzhennia Zenoviia Lavryshyna" [On the 70th birthday of Zenoby Lawryshyn], *Meest*, 6 June 2013.

⁶ Lubka Kolessa taught piano at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto from 1942 to 1955.

At the time Paris was the center of the avant-garde school, associated with Pierre Boulez, Olivier Messiaen and André Jolivet. Jolivet was especially famous for his interest in combining ancient music with the latest experiments in the field of acoustics, polytonality and serial music. Perhaps it was precisely because of this that Lawryshyn, who dreamed of obtaining a classical but modern European music education, decided to enter Jolivet's class in composition and counterpoint.

Accumulating the knowledge of French composers, Lawryshyn made his first attempts at implementing atonal and dissonant melodies into his works, within the context of Ukrainian musical style. While studying in Paris, he completed a series of compositions to the poetry of Taras Shevchenko, Ivan Franko and Irena Senyk. However, it cannot be said that his works from the "French period" had direct associations with the avant-garde tendencies that prevailed in the mid-1960s in Europe. He hardly employed serialism or pure aleatory. The harmonious language of his compositions, though saturated with dissonant elements and unexpected modulations, was, nevertheless, far from the atonal composition of Arnold Schoenberg or Pierre Boulez, or the serialism of Jean Barraqué.

After successfully completing a one-year internship in Paris, Lawryshyn attempted to continue his studies with financial assistance from the Canada Council for the Arts. But he was not able to secure his stay in France in time and had to return to Canada, where he enrolled in a master's degree program at the University of Toronto. He completed the composition program in 1969 and the education program in 1970.

It was during this period of study from 1967 to 1970 that Lawryshyn began to work actively as a choral conductor, chorus master, pianist and accompanist. He was invited to lead the Chaika Youth Choir in Hamilton, with whom he often performed in different Canadian provinces and which he led on a concert tour of the United States of America and Europe. For this ensemble Lawryshyn composed children's choral cycles, vocal works accompanied by bandura and *a cappella* arrangements of Ukrainian folk songs.

Continual work with choral scores gave Lawryshyn the opportunity to grasp the specifics of vocal texture and to comprehend the principles of vocal writing and counterpoint. He had

opportunities to lead choral groups of various types over a period of many years, from 1967 to 1978, ranging from children's choirs to mixed choirs and male ensembles, such as Boyan and Burlaka. His collaboration with various choral ensembles was a kind of creative laboratory, since it was possible to analyze the stylistics and techniques of choral writing by other composers, and also to hear his own works in performance. Indeed, the bulk of Lawryshyn's output consists of choral and vocal compositions.

Lawryshyn often composed works for specific performers. He wrote more than thirty compositions for male choirs, including works to texts by Ivan Franko, Taras Shevchenko, Lesia Ukrainka, and Oleksander Oles. He composed songs, romances and choral arrangements to texts by partisans, Ukrainian Insurgent Army members and contemporary Ukrainian poets.

Zenoby Lawryshyn was well versed in the principles and trends of composition. But his creativity was not characterized by formalistic borrowing of modern compositional techniques simply because they were commercially justified or fashionable. Despite the modern stylistic features in his works, he did not use popular compositional techniques for the sake of effect. Lawryshyn's works combined the traditions of Neo-Romanticism and Impressionism,⁷ with classical techniques of polyphony in tonal and harmonic development.

His choral works were distinguished by a perfect grasp of rhythmic and harmonic variation, and the subtle polytonal development of melodic structures. In multi-part choral compositions such as cantatas, duma-cantatas and choral cycles, primarily *The Golden Echo* (to words by Pavlo Tychyna), the *In Praise of Glorious Men* choral concerto and the cyclic cantata *Olzhychiana*, Lawryshyn saturated the polyphonic texture with the dynamics of harmonic development, timbral colours and structural variability. These elements were combined in the cycle *Olzhychiana*, which was also notable for being the first musical setting of the texts of Oleh Olzhych. Composed at the request of longtime collaborator Halyna Kvitka Kondracki, conductor of Toronto's Vesnivka Choir, Lawryshyn presented an interesting interpretation of imagery and original combination of poetic material. In the 12-part cycle, the composer developed the dramaturgy of contrasting images through the juxtaposition of choral numbers, in which the conflict of the entire work acquired the features of dramatic symphonism. However, the organic

⁷ This tendency was especially noticeable in his pieces for violin and cello.

nature of the composer's musical vocabulary contributed to the sense of stylistic and melodic unity of all the sections.

A deep understanding of the nature of melodic structures inherent to Ukrainian music gave Lawryshyn's works a unique flavour that reflected the imagery of traditional Ukrainian culture. His arrangements of folk songs, carols and *shchedrivky* were similar in development to the choral miniatures of Mykola Leontovych and Alexander Koshetz. His original reading of the figurative symbolism, hidden in folk songs, and the musical "decoding" of canonical church texts, enabled Lawryshyn to achieve musical and verbal synthesis in his choral compositions.⁸ Often the vocal and melodic contour, mainly in the arrangements of folk songs, and songs of the winter cycle, was characterized by classical diatonic polyphony and dissonant vocal parts. "His new treatments of Ukrainian Christmas carols from Bukovyna and Lemkivshchyna," remarked musicologist Dagmara Duvirak, "are distinguished by a certain asceticism of musical thinking, where the line prevails over colour, and the diatonic over chromaticism. The polyphonic vocal writing, sometimes harsh and sharply discordant, revealed new, unexpected shades in such carols as 'Pryletila lastivochka' and 'Hei, chy tam doma'."

Choral music was the dominant genre of Lawryshyn's work, and his collaboration with church choirs was particularly fruitful.⁹ He was the author of two Liturgies, a *Panakhyda*, a Prayer Service for the Patriarch, and many *a cappella* works to canonical texts.¹⁰ Sacred music occupied a special place in his professional, spiritual and aesthetic life. Through church music, he affirmed the continuity of tradition and his adherence to his ancestral culture. Lawryshyn was well-versed in the techniques of polyphonic writing and creatively transformed the melodic-harmonic paradigms of religious music, which were developed by Ukrainian composers Dmytro Bortniansky, Maksym Berezovsky, Kyrylo Stetsenko and Alexander Koshetz. Some of these elements are present in Lawryshyn's carols, especially "Vo Vyfleiem" (In Bethlehem, 1996), "Nebo i zemlia" (Heaven and earth, 2001), "Vselennaia, veselysia" (Let all creation rejoice, 2004), and in classical miniatures from the calendar cycles of Mykola Lysenko. Lawryshyn

⁸ Zenoby Lawryshyn edited five volumes (7-11) of *Ukrains'ki narodni melodiï* [Ukrainian folk melodies], collected and edited by Zenowij Lysko, Toronto-New York: UVAN, 1981.

⁹ Between 1982 and 2013 Zenoby Lawryshyn was conductor of the church choirs at St. Josaphat, Holy Eucharist and Holy Protection parishes. He conducted combined choirs at three sacred music concerts at Toronto's Massey Hall and Convocation Hall.

¹⁰ A Liturgy for Four-Part Mixed Choir (1985), Liturgy for Three-Part Choir (1988). *Panakhyda* (1997), *Prayer for the Patriarch for a cappella* choir.

worked out in detail not only the practical aspects of liturgical writing, he also deepened his knowledge as a researcher of religious music, editing the choral heritage of the masters of the *partesny* choral concerto, in particular, of Artem Vedel.¹¹

His study of *partesny* and liturgical music came about not only through his constant work as a conductor of amateur choirs, but also through the public performance of religious music on the professional stage. Notably, Lawryshyn conducted combined choirs accompanied by a symphony orchestra at a concert to mark the millennium of the Baptism of Ukraine (1988), where, among other liturgical works, his choral cantata *Velykyi den'* (A great day) and his orchestrations of choral works by other composers were also performed.¹²

The tradition of church music, bound to the interpretation of canonical texts, imposes certain restrictions on the contemporary interpretation of liturgical music. Given the nature of thematic and vocal development, the sacred works of Lawryshyn reflect the tradition of Ukrainian solo singing, combined with the technique of vocal writing in *partesny* concertos and the polyphonic development inherent in religious and secular chants.

Following the Ukrainian premiere of Lawryshyn's Liturgy at the Music of the Ukrainian Abroad Festival in 1992, musicologist Liubov Kyianovska stressed the combination of the traditional and the innovative in the composer's sacred music: "Zenoby Lawryshyn solves the problem of modern interpretation of the canonical genre, emphasizing the relief of linear interlacing and the plasticity of each individual melodic voice. The figurative concept of the work, despite the obligatory connections with Ukrainian folkloric elements, is most 'Europeanized,' that is, contemplatively objective, with the dominance of an enlightened, ideal state. A similar interpretation of religious sentiment is characteristic, in particular, of the French school of the twentieth century."¹³

¹¹ Lawryshyn was the musical editor of the publication *Rukopysna spadshchyna Artemiia Vedelia* [The manuscript legacy of Artemii Vedel].

¹² *Velykyi den'* (A great day), cantata for baritone soloist, mixed and male choruses and symphony orchestra (1988) and an orchestral version of the choral concert "Sei den', ieho zhe sotvoryv Hospod'" (This is the day, which the Lord hath made) by Dmytro Bortniansky

¹³ Liubov Kyianovska, "Z-za pidniatoï zavisy" [From behind the raised curtain], *Muzyka*, 1 (1992).

Although Lawryshyn's "genetic" affiliation with Ukrainian folk music manifested itself primarily in vocal and choral genres, he also used folk music elements in chamber instrumental music.

The vocal nature of Lawryshyn's melodies, regardless of whether they belong to choral or instrumental music, appears to be the dominant element of his work. The music critic Volodymyr Hrabovsky emphasized that the works of the composer, "who is familiar, of course, with all the latest trends and technologies, are surprising in their 'fidelity' to the national principle: he is gifted in how he creates compositions in which Ukrainian colour, national spirit and imagery are easily detected. He especially cares about details in his vocal works, vividly colouring the scores with polyphony, giving them full-blooded sound, with a rich palette of images, from lyrical melancholy to humourous to tragically heroic."¹⁴

To a certain extent, his instrumental works were also marked by national themes. Lawryshyn often choose a historical context, genres or themes with a direct or indirect connection to the Ukrainian tradition. Sometimes he made direct analogies with textual or poetic and symbolic elements in instrumental works, for example, the "Shche ne vmerla" (Not yet perished) Trio for piano, violin and cello; Fantasy on Shevchenko Themes for piano; the "Ne pora" (It is not yet time) Quintet for wind instruments; Fantasy on the Carol "Radist' z neba" (Joy from the heavens) for bandura orchestra; "Shcho to za predyvo" (Oh, what a wonder) for clarinet; or "Shchedryk" for clarinet with piano. This list of Lawryshyn's instrumental works indicates the constant inspiration of his work from the sources of Ukrainian culture, in particular from vocal music.

An element, which was indicative of and constant in the vast majority of Lawryshyn's instrumental compositions, was his ability to transform the vocal intonation inherent in the choral tradition of the Ukrainian melos, into the context of an instrumental work. Volodymyr Hrabovsky confirmed this thesis, noting "the author's great attention to melody—his is authentically national, and it has a strong reliance on the polyphonic richness of the Ukrainian folk song."¹⁵

¹⁴ Volodymyr Hrabovsky, "Natsional'na stykhiia tvorchosti" [The national element of creativity]. *Muzyka* 6 (no. 365, November-December 2007).

¹⁵ Ibid.

Lawryshyn's chamber-instrumental and symphonic works include pieces for string instruments, a Sonata for Strings and *Fuga della Fantasia*, Symphony for large orchestra, Symphony Concertante (for piano, harp and orchestra) and the *Velykyi den'* (A great day) symphonic cantata (for two choirs, baritone and orchestra). He also wrote works for woodwind quintet, a string quartet and two piano trios.

Lawryshyn devoted a great deal of time to arrangements, orchestration, piano accompaniments and musical editing of Ukrainian music, ranging from the arrangement of choral concertos by Dmytro Bortniansky ("This Is the Day" and "Under Your Protection"), orchestral versions of operas by Semen Hulak-Artemovsky (*Zaporozhets' za Dunaiem*),¹⁶ Mykola Lysenko (*Natalka Poltavka*) and Mykola Arkas (*Kateryna*),¹⁷ to arranging songs of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, light pieces by Bohdan Weselowsky, and works by Hryhoriy Davydovsky and Isydor Vorobkevych. He worked in the field of stage music, composing an operetta, *Sammy* (2005), and an opera, *Orphan Princess* (unfinished), music to films (*Nikoly ne zabudu* [I will never forget], *Marichka*, "Elegy" for the documentary *Harvest of Despair*¹⁸) and incidental music for theatrical productions.

Zenoby Lawryshyn's creative achievements are not yet adequately represented in recordings or published scores, and there is comparatively little critical analysis of his work. However, hope remains that he will assume his proper place in the history of the development of Ukrainian-Canadian musical culture. His works, so varied in musical style and imagery, and individual in their artistic and professional qualities, represent the composer's artistic position.

Zenoby Lawryshyn died in Toronto on 31 January 2017 at the age of 73.

¹⁶ Lawryshyn augmented the overture to the opera *Zaporozhets' za Dunaiem* (The Zaporozhian Cossack beyond the Danube).

¹⁷ Lawryshyn orchestrated the choral score of *Kateryna*, as edited by Wolodymyr Kolesnyk.

¹⁸ His music for the film *Harvest of Despair* received the Golden Sheaf Award.

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