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## MUSICAL PERFORMANCES ON THE MODERN STAGE: GENRES, THEMES, INTERPRETATIONS

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to identify the features of genre diversity and artistic-imagery content in contemporary stage productions with a musical component. The research methodology included art and musicological analysis, as well as a structural-semantic approach. The content analysis method was used to identify the main thematic trends. The study of the thematic content of contemporary musical performances revealed several key trends. Firstly, a significant number of productions focused on the exploration of national identity, historical events, and cultural heritage – reflected in performances based on Ukrainian literary classics and folklore. Secondly, there was a noticeable interest in social issues, particularly themes of war, emigration, and the search for self

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in changing sociocultural conditions. The approaches combined traditional vocal-instrumental forms with innovative stage solutions – such as multimedia technologies, interactive audience engagement, and the fusion of live performance with electronic music. Particular attention was paid to scenography and choreographic design – both of which strongly influenced the overall dramaturgy of the productions. In the course of the study, it was demonstrated that contemporary musical performances played an important role in the development of Ukrainian theatre and musical art – contributing to the renewal of traditional forms, enrichment of the performance palette, and expansion of theatre’s influence on a wider audience. These performances became an effective means of communication between the artist and society, as well as a reflection of current cultural and social processes.

**Keywords:** Vocal art, musical art, performing interpretation, musical variety of Ukraine, theatrical art, instrumental art.

## **MODERN SAHNEDE MÜZİKAL PERFORMANSLAR: TÜR, TEMALAR, YORUMLAR**

### **ÖZ**

Bu çalışmanın amacı, müzik unsurları içeren çağdaş sahne yapımlarında tür çeşitliliği ve sanatsal-imgesel içeriğin özelliklerini belirlemektir. Araştırma metodolojisi, sanat ve müzikolojik analizlerin yanı sıra yapısal-anlamsal bir yaklaşımı da içermektedir. Ana tematik eğilimleri belirlemek için içerik analizi yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Çağdaş müzik performanslarının tematik içeriğinin incelenmesi, birkaç önemli eğilimi ortaya çıkarmıştır. İlk olarak, önemli sayıda yapım ulusal kimlik, tarihi olaylar ve kültürel mirasın keşfine odaklanmıştı; bu, Ukrayna edebiyat klasikleri ve folkloruna dayanan performanslarda yansıtılmıştı. İkinci olarak, sosyal konulara, özellikle savaş, göç ve değişen sosyokültürel koşullarda kendini arama temalarına belirgin bir ilgi vardı. Yaklaşımlar, geleneksel vokal-enstrümantal formları, multimedya teknolojileri, interaktif seyirci katılımı ve canlı performans ile elektronik müziğin birleşimi gibi yenilikçi sahne çözümleriyle birleştiriyordu. Sahne tasarımı ve koreografi tasarımına özel önem verildi; her ikisi de yapımların genel dramaturjisini güçlü bir şekilde etkiledi. Çalışma sırasında, çağdaş müzik performanslarının Ukrayna tiyatrosu ve müzik sanatının gelişiminde önemli bir rol oynadığı, geleneksel formların yenilenmesine, performans paletinin zenginleşmesine ve tiyatronun daha geniş bir izleyici kitlesi üzerindeki etkisinin genişlemesine katkıda bulunduğu gösterildi. Bu

performanslar, sanatçı ve toplum arasında etkili bir iletişim aracı haline geldi ve aynı zamanda güncel kültürel ve sosyal süreçlerin bir yansıması oldu.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Vokal sanat, müzik sanatı, performans yorumu, Ukrayna'nın müzik çeşitliliği, tiyatro sanatı, enstrümantal sanat.

## INTRODUCTION

Musical and theatrical art of the 21st century in Ukraine has been undergoing a period of active development. Theatre productions with musical components have increasingly gone beyond classical opera or dramatic genres, offering audiences synthetic forms of art that integrate vocals, instrumental performance, modern multimedia technologies, and performance art. The themes of these productions have become an important means of reflecting societal change, rethinking historical memory, and forming cultural identity. Ukrainian musical theatre has actively responded to the challenges of the time – offering productions that deal with themes of war, national revival, social issues, and human experience. Analysing such productions allows for an assessment of the impact on shaping the cultural landscape, identifying new trends and outlining prospects for further development of musical theatre in Ukraine.

In the study, McKnight (2024) analysed the role of theatre in the process of constructing national identity in Ukraine, focusing on two historical periods – the 1920s and the 2020s. In the 1920s, Ukrainian theatre was used as an ideological tool within the framework of Soviet cultural policy, while also containing elements of national revival. Regarding the modern period, the author investigated how the theatre of the 2020s has responded to war and political transformations in Ukraine. Galatska et al. (2023) explored theatrical life in 21st-century Ukraine through the lens of journalistic analysis, focusing on the role of the individual in stage art. The researchers stressed that modern Ukrainian theatre has acquired not only aesthetic but also social functions. Devdiuk and Marchuk (2022) studied Ukrainian modernist drama in a broad European context – tracing its connections with pan-European artistic trends of the early 20th century. The authors emphasised that Ukrainian modernism was formed under the influence of Western European literary and theatrical practices, yet retained its national specificity through references to folklore, historical memory, and social issues. Arrington (2021) examined the stages of theatre development in the context of late modernism. The author stressed that late modernism in theatre has been not only an aesthetic but also an ethical category. Similar conclusions were reached by Shepherd-Barr (2010).

One of the key tools in shaping the artistic profile of a theatre is the process of repertoire formation. A successful selection of productions fosters the development of theatrical tradition, audience expansion and the actualisation of important social themes through stage art. Yan (2022) studied how the process of repertoire formation in Ukrainian musical-dramatic theatre at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century influenced nation-building processes. The author noted that during this period, theatre served not only an entertaining or artistic function but also acted as an important tool of cultural policy aimed at consolidating Ukrainian identity. Høffding and Satne (2019) explored the dynamics of interaction among musicians during solo and ensemble performances. Turschet (2023) examined the concept of the musical metaverse, including opportunities for musicians, audiences, and creative teams.

The aim of this study was to determine the specifics of genre diversity and artistic-imagery content of contemporary musical-theatrical performances, as well as to analyse performance methods used in the stage realisation. During the research, the following objectives were carried out: the genre variety of contemporary musical performances was analysed, and the main stylistic features identified; the artistic-imagery content of productions with musical components was examined and key development trends identified; performance approaches and interpretation techniques in contemporary musical theatre were characterised.

## **METHODOLOGY**

During the course of the research, a wide range of productions containing musical components were reviewed – particular attention was paid to operas, musicals, and ballets that were actively presented on the Ukrainian and European stages. The empirical basis of the study comprised specific productions that were analysed in terms of the genre content, musical arrangement, directorial concepts, and performance approaches. The analysis included contemporary experimental performances that combined various genres and styles. The main criteria for selection were the presence of innovative directorial solutions, integration of musical genres, use of multimedia technologies, as well as the impact of the productions on the development of musical theatre. The empirical basis of the study consisted of performances that gained significant public attention, were presented at international festivals, or became notable in the Ukrainian theatrical context. The analysis was carried out considering the genre composition, musical design, directorial ideas and performance strategies. Productions that did not demonstrate genre innovation, did not employ experimental musical and staging techniques, or did not receive

significant attention from professional artistic circles were excluded from the study. Among the analysed productions were – You [Romance] (MUR, 2024), the opera-myth Ukraine – Terra Incognita (2023), the opera-requiem IYOV (Betv, 2015), the opera-circus Babylon (Betv, 2017), the opera-ballet The Ark (Betv, 2018), the ballet Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors (Sharamova, 2024), the ballet DiscrimiNATION (Golynska, 2023), and the ballet Tomorrow (Kabatsii, 2023). The research included an art history analysis aimed at examining the genre specifics, scenographic solutions and directorial approaches to staging musical productions. The musicological analysis allowed for the study of features of musical dramaturgy, stylistic aspects, and performance techniques applied in theatrical productions.

Furthermore, to investigate the influence of genre features and performance strategies on the perception of contemporary musical theatre, a survey was conducted among 50 respondents. The sample included both spectators and professionals in the field of musical theatre – namely, actors, directors, musicians, and theatre experts. Inclusion criteria were experience of watching contemporary musical performances, interest in theatrical art, and willingness to provide a reasoned assessment. Exclusion criteria included lack of experience in attending performances or unfamiliarity with modern trends in musical theatre.

Furthermore, a survey was conducted among 50 respondents to investigate the influence of genre features and performance strategies on the perception of contemporary musical theatre. The survey consisted of 10 questions with predefined answer options, all in a single-choice format. The sample included both spectators and professionals in the field of musical theatre – namely, actors, directors, musicians, and theatre experts. Inclusion criteria were experience in watching contemporary musical performances, interest in theatrical art, and willingness to provide a reasoned assessment. Exclusion criteria included lack of experience in attending performances or unfamiliarity with modern trends in musical theatre. The survey was conducted at the Lviv National Philharmonic in winter 2024.

The survey was conducted in compliance with ethical standards: participation was voluntary, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, and the anonymity of responses was ensured. The collected data were used exclusively for scientific purposes.

## **FINDINGS**

### **1. Genre diversity of modern musical performances and the main stylistic features.**

Musical theatre productions represent an integration of numerous artistic elements that interact to create a holistic artistic image. The primary aim of the artistic imagery is to create an impression that immerses the audience and conveys the concept of the performance through the combination of music, scenography, costumes, choreography, and lighting (Karzhaubaeva & Kopbasarova, 2021). Music in musical performances is not merely a background element – it is a core component that shapes the atmosphere, reveals character traits, and enhances the narrative's pace (Tronchin et al., 2023). For example, changes in musical accompaniment can intensify emotional tension and character mood shifts. Scenography defines the spatial context in which events unfold. Costumes not only denote the social status of characters but also convey the psychological states and emotional transitions (Chaika, 2024). Costume changes during the performance can symbolise character development and internal experiences. The harmony of all elements ensures an effective artistic expression, thereby generating a profound emotional and intellectual experience for the audience. Radosavljević (2022) emphasised that digital technologies allow theatre not only to adapt to changing conditions, but also to overcome distances, offering access to theatre productions through online formats.

The musical as a genre emerged in the 20th century in the United States through the synthesis of popular music, theatre, dance and dramatic acting. The musical, as a genre, blends operatic, theatrical and popular music traditions which contributes to its flexibility and broad appeal (Gänzl & Findlay, 2022). Vocally, musicals accommodate various singing techniques allowing a wider range of performers to take part in productions (Cancellieri et al., 2022). Unlike classical musicals, contemporary works often feature diverse musical styles – from rock and hip-hop to classical ballads and jazz (Williamon et al., 2021). Moreover, modern musicals often integrate theatrical text and music through modern technologies. Virtual elements, multimedia visualisations and interactive special effects have become essential parts of such productions. Music and lighting effects not only complement one another, but also shape an immersive atmosphere that is woven into the overarching narrative. The musicians also contribute to the development of theatrical art, the popularisation of music and theatre among youth, and increased interest in theatrical performances (Frigotto & Frigotto, 2022).

One of the most contemporary musicals to gain wide acclaim among Ukrainian and European audiences is the album-musical *You [Romance]* by the band MUR (2024), which premiered in 2024. The production is an innovative project that combines elements of musical theatre and dramatic performance to honour the artists of the Executed Renaissance. This interdisciplinary creation integrates music, poetry, acting, and stage effects, immersing the viewer in the atmosphere of Ukraine's 20th-century tragedy. The performance stands out not only for its visual expressiveness but also for its profound emotional content. At its core are the lives of prominent Ukrainian artists who lived in the legendary Slovo Building: Pavlo Tychyna, Mykola Khvylovyi, Les Kurbas, Ostap Vyshnia, and Mykhail Semenko. The Slovo Building, located in Kyiv, is a historically significant site for Ukrainian intellectuals and artists, serving as a hub for writers, poets, and cultural figures during the early 20th century. It became a symbol of the Ukrainian literary and cultural renaissance, particularly in the 1920s, when it housed key figures of the Executed Renaissance, a group of prominent Ukrainian writers and intellectuals tragically persecuted during Stalin's purges.

The musical language of the performance involves the organic fusion of multiple genres. Rap compositions serve as the main narrative tool – structuring the plot and revealing the characters' personalities. The lyrics contain excerpts or allusions to the literary works of the Executed Renaissance. The structure of the musical is fragmentary, reflecting the mosaic perception of history. It comprises 18 tracks that include documentary inserts, dialogues, and movement-based scenes. The integration of dialogue into musical compositions underlines the effectiveness and tight connection of the music album with the theatrical action. The arrangements combine contemporary musical genres, such as hip-hop, R'n'B, and house, with traditional Ukrainian motifs. The scenography balances minimalism and symbolism with a set resembling the architecture of the Slovo Building as a central design element (Photo 1).



*Photo 1. MUR performance: "You [Romance]".*

*Source: compiled by the authors based on Tkachenko (2024).*

Opera is a synthetic genre of musical art that combines vocal, orchestral, dramatic and stage components. In contemporary musicology, opera is viewed as a dynamic system that adapts to changes in the cultural space while preserving the principles of dramaturgical unity and the symbiosis of artistic means (Radu-Djurdu, 2022). Ukrainian opera of the 21st century, despite its relative youth on the European stage, actively engages with classical operatic traditions, while also experimenting and refining stage interpretations (Tomlinson, 2021). Among Ukrainian operas of the 21st century, the opera-myth *Ukraine – Terra Incognita* (2023), created by Ulyana Horbachevska and Mariya Oliinyk, stands out. The national premiere of the opera in Lviv in 2021 became an important cultural event, gaining support and recognition not only in the Ukrainian artistic space, but also abroad. This opera combines traditional Ukrainian singing with symphonic music and contemporary genres such as free jazz, video art, contemporary choreography, and futuristic costumes, revealing a powerful synthesis of ancient and modern cultural forms. The opera-myth is dedicated to the memory of Vasyl Slipak – a singer and warrior who sacrificed his career and life to defend Ukraine.



The opera consists of five myths, each embodying important aspects of Ukrainian culture and identity. The Myth of Kin focuses on ritual women's songs, reflecting the cycle of life and the connection between generations. The Myth of Home encompasses lullabies and fairy tales symbolising the beginning of life and its first steps. The Myth of Love reveals the diversity of emotional states experienced in the context of love, from tenderness to passion. The Myth of the Steppe transports the listener into the world of Cossack and Chumak songs, conveying a sense of freedom and struggle. The final – Myth of the Iron Heart – affirms courage, resilience, and unbreakability in the face of trials. All five myths are woven into a unified narrative about the Warrior (whose prototype is Vasyl Slipak) who has the strength to protect the land, people and love, possessing an “Iron Heart.”

The technical and artistic elements of the opera also play an important role in its overall perception. The combination of symphonic music with free jazz improvisations creates a unique. Video art and costumes add visual expressiveness and reinforce the conceptual narrative. The video art embodies images and symbols such as the Steppe, the Home, and the Iron Heart (Photo 2).



*Photo 2. Production of the opera-myth “Ukraine – Terra Incognita” September 2020. Lviv (space “Lem Station”).*

*Source: compiled by the authors based on Pavlyk (2020).*

Ballet is one of the oldest genres of performing arts, combining choreographic, musical, and dramatic elements into a unified performance. Marked by the high technical skill of dancers, ballet expresses emotions and narrative through complex movements, poses, and interaction with musical accompaniment (Ayvazoglu & Ozcan, 2021). Contemporary Ukrainian ballet combines the traditions of classical art with elements of modernism, avant-garde, and experimental choreographic forms (Mould, 2024). One of the main directions has been the integration of ballet with other forms of art, including theatre, painting, and digital technologies.

An example of a contemporary (21st-century) Ukrainian ballet production is the ballet *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (Sharamova, 2024), which represents an innovative interpretation of the legendary novel by Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi. The premiere took place on the stage of the Lviv National Opera. The story of the love between Ivan and Marichka – two members of feuding families, intertwined with elements of folk traditions and mythology – is the main plotline of the ballet. The choreography by Artem Shoshyn embodies a synthesis of neoclassical elements with contemporary dance trends, allowing viewers to immerse themselves in a fantastical world where ancient Hutsul traditions intertwine with modern choreographic forms. Shoshyn, using contemporary and neoclassical techniques, skilfully combines the classical plasticity of ballet with the expressiveness of modern dance. This choreography conveys the inner world of the characters, the struggle for love and the place in the world, which is a crucial part of the production. The scenography transports viewers into a postmodernist world where forest and stone symbolise key philosophical aspects of the performance. The costumes combine authentic elements of Hutsul clothing with modern design solutions (Photo 3).



*Photo 3. Performance of the ballet “Shadows of forgotten ancestors”.*

*Source: compiled by the authors based on Sharamova (2024).*

The music for the ballet was composed by Ivan Nebesnyi, who created an audiovisual atmosphere combining elements of Hutsul folklore with innovative sound explorations. An important aspect is the use of authentic Hutsul carols, laments, and folk songs, as human voices are added to the

traditional synthesis of instrumental music and dance typical of the ballet genre: soprano, female mourners, and caroller. These elements emphasise the ethnic roots of the performance fostering a deeper immersion into the culture of the Carpathians, where part of the action is set.

## 2. Analysis of the artistic and figurative content of productions and performing interpretations based on the results of the survey

The survey made it possible to assess the level of interest of the audience and musical theatre professionals, to determine the dominant aesthetic preferences, and to trace the peculiarities of perception of experimental forms of stage art (Table 1).

| No. | Question                                                                                                                                        | Answer options                                                            | Results (%)           |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1   | Have you noticed any changes in the genre palette of musical performances over the last 5 years?                                                | Yes / No                                                                  | 72 / 28               |
| 2   | How do you evaluate modern experimental performances combining music, theatre, and multimedia?                                                  | Positive / Neutral / Negative                                             | 56 / 34 / 10          |
| 3   | Is the tradition of musical theatre important to you, or do you support innovation?                                                             | Tradition / Innovation / Balance                                          | 34 / 50 / 16          |
| 4   | Which musical styles do you believe are best suited for contemporary theatre?                                                                   | Classical / Jazz / Electronic / Folk / Other                              | 42 / 22 / 18 / 12 / 6 |
| 5   | How much does the quality of musical arrangement influence your perception of a performance?                                                    | Very strong / Moderate / No effect                                        | 66 / 28 / 6           |
| 6   | Which factors most influence your emotional reaction during a performance?                                                                      | Music / Acting / Story / Visual design                                    | 48 / 34 / 12 / 6      |
| 7   | How important is the performance level of actors and musicians to you?                                                                          | Very important / Moderately important / Not important                     | 70 / 20 / 10          |
| 8   | What changes do you believe are necessary for the development of musical theatre in Ukraine?                                                    | State support / New directorial approaches / Expanding the genre spectrum | 50 / 30 / 20          |
| 9   | How has the thematic content of music in theatre productions changed since 2022 as a reaction to social upheavals and cultural transformations? | Positive / Neutral / Negative                                             | 64 / 26 / 10          |
| 10  | How do you evaluate the level of popularisation of Ukrainian musical theatre among youth?                                                       | High / Medium / Low                                                       | 18 / 46 / 36          |

*Table 1. Survey results.*

*Source: compiled by the authors.*

The significant majority indicated changes in the genre palette of musical performances, which points to the dynamic development of musical theatre in Ukraine. These changes include both genre expansion and new stylistic approaches, particularly the combination of classical genres with new experimental forms. For instance, the Ukrainian musicians' collective Nova Opera is a project that actively implements innovative approaches in creating operatic forms. The main goal of the formation is to break traditional boundaries between genres and to apply experimental forms of musical and stage art. The musicians offer a new type of opera production in which music, theatrical interpretation, and other stage elements are integrated into original synthetic forms. Improvisational opera, opera-requiem, opera-circus, opera-ballet, dream-opera, neo-opera-horror,

trap-opera, futuristic opera, dystopian opera, archaeological opera, meta-opera, PhD-opera, Re:post-opera – all these terms are the result of the search for new expressive means within the classical operatic tradition (Payne, 2021).

One of Nova Opera's greatest achievements is its ability to synthesise different genres and styles combining classical operatic forms with contemporary instruments and technologies. For example, the opera-requiem "IYOV" (Betv, 2015) embodied the fusion of traditional opera and sacred music with new musical forms. It attracted attention not only due to its philosophical depth, but also its unique sound made possible through modern instruments and experimental audio solutions.

Another important project that continues to advance genre innovation is the opera-circus "Babylon" (Betv, 2017). It reveals a new dimension in combining circus elements with operatic music transforming traditional circus into an artistic performance that synthesises various genres and styles. A similar approach has been used in dream-operas where traditional operatic vocals are mixed with electronic music and new forms of theatrical production.

One of the most notable aspects of Nova Opera's work is the pursuit of innovation through modern music technologies. For example, the opera "AEROPHONIA", in which a real aeroplane was used as a musical instrument. This performance was not only about music but also a major technical experiment that blurred the boundaries between musical genres and gave the genres new, sometimes futuristic soundscapes.

There was a positive evaluation of experimental performances that combine music, theatre, multimedia, and video art. This approach allows for the creation of new emotional and visual spaces and engages younger audiences who are already accustomed to digital technologies. However, the presence of neutral and negative responses indicates that not all viewers are ready to accept the blending of classical and modern forms. This perception is often related to the fact that traditional musical theatre is more comprehensible to conservative audiences. This result also points to a possible underdevelopment in many viewers' understandings of how new media can be used to enhance emotional impact.

Support for innovation in musical theatre reflects a desire to see new forms and genre experiments, particularly relevant in a context where musical theatre needs to attract a diverse audience, including younger viewers for whom modern technologies and new genre approaches are part of a familiar cultural environment (Rybchenko, 2021; Sydykov, 2025). At the same time, support for tradition indicates the importance of preserving the classical foundations of theatrical art. The idea

of balancing traditional and innovative is the most relevant in 21st-century musical performances as productions overwhelmed by novelty may be incomprehensible to large portions of the audience (Monteiro & Páscoa, 2025).

The priority of classical music is telling, as it is traditionally the core genre in musical theatre. At the same time, the growing popularity of jazz and electronic music points to openness to new forms of expression (Guliyeva & Kopanitsa, 2024). Again, at the stage of musical composition, the idea of synthesising the traditional and innovative proves correct – most 21st-century productions combine various musical styles. For example, the opera-ballet “The Ark” (Betv, 2018) – the final part of the biblical trilogy IYOV-BABYLON-ARK by Nova Opera – combines Baroque motifs, neo-minimalist techniques, and electronic processing to create a unique sound. The composers integrated fragments from the oratorio “De Profundis”, combining these fragments with sacred texts. Electronic sound design plays a vital role in transforming live vocals and instrumental parts. In contemporary Ukrainian productions – for example, in the ballet “DiscrimiNATION” (Golynska, 2023) – music plays a key role in shaping the emotional perception of the performance, serving not only as a background but also as a full-fledged dramaturgical tool. The combination of the Baroque grandeur of G. Handel’s music with the refined minimalism of V. Silvestrov creates contrast, enhancing the tension and drama of the choreography. Changes in musical tempo, harmony, and dynamics influence movement rhythm, allowing for the depth of emotional states to be revealed. Thanks to the music, the viewer is immersed in the atmosphere of the production – experiencing each nuance through sound that interacts with the plasticity of the dance. This fusion forms a powerful stage statement. Acting was also a significant factor indicating that the actors’ visual and emotional interaction with the audience can evoke a strong response. The low percentage pointing to plot and visual design suggests that these elements serve to reinforce the core message of the production. Productions featuring a high level of musical and theatrical technique are more likely to succeed with audiences.

Performance approaches and interpretation techniques in contemporary musical theatre are of great importance as these approaches and interpretation determine how the artistic concept is realised on stage. Musical theatre is multidisciplinary combining vocal performance, acting, choreography, and technology to create a unified emotional impact on the viewer. Performers not only demonstrate technical ability but also work on deeply understanding dramaturgy and character

psychology. The interpretative approach is essential to conveying the emotional context of a work as each performance seeks to establish an emotional connection with the audience.

Over the last decades, performance practice has changed significantly, especially in terms of expanding the means of conveying ideas, including the integration of new technologies such as multimedia projections, video art, lighting effects, and new theatrical forms that allow for a deeper impact on the viewer (Tarasenko & Tarasenko, 2025). Changes in performance practice also concern acting technique. Modern performers must possess not only vocal and dramatic skills but also choreographic and stage technique. Flexibility has become a crucial trait as actors are often required to work across genres, from classical opera to musicals and experimental forms (Putiatytska et al., 2024). An interdisciplinary approach allows effectively combining these various aspects of performing arts.

The need for state support is critical for the development of musical theatre as the absence of funding and stable grants may limit opportunities for innovation and experimentation. Most viewers believe that after 2022, the thematic focus of music in theatre productions has become a more expressive tool for reflecting on societal upheavals and cultural change. Music is no longer just a mood-setting background but has transformed at a conceptual level, reflecting the conflicts of the modern world. For example, in the ballet “Tomorrow” (Kabatsii, 2023) set to Chopin’s music and presented by Kyiv Modern Ballet – the music, in the context of the theme of life’s transience, highlights the importance of present decisions in shaping the future. This shows that music in contemporary theatre productions is becoming a vital element in expressing deep social change and emotional experience brought on by war and cultural transformation. There is a need to broaden the genre palette and integrate modern technologies, which could make theatrical art more accessible and appealing to young people.

## **DISCUSSION**

Contemporary Ukrainian musical performances include a variety of genres, namely: musical, opera, operetta, and ballet. There is also a clear trend towards synthesising different genres and creating new ones, for example: opera-myth, dream-opera, album-musical, and opera-ballet. Yefimenko (2021) examined the latest trends in Ukrainian opera art, particularly focusing on the involvement of Ukrainian composers and vocalists in the creation of modern opera projects. The author concluded that it is necessary to develop new strategies in Ukraine’s opera art where experimental forms combining classical elements of opera tradition with cutting-edge technologies

come to the fore. Similarly, in the research, Todea-Săhlian (2021) analysed the evolution of opera performance from an initial focus on scenographic productions to the development of opera productions in the 19th century. The author concluded that opera in the 20th century continued to evolve integrating new elements without losing its classical essence as a genre. Likewise, Utz (2021) emphasised that due to globalisation, composers of the 20th and 21st centuries borrowed elements from different traditions combining styles that once seemed incompatible. Thus, the synthesis of genres in 21st-century Ukrainian opera art confirms the evolutionary process of opera as a genre in its classical sense.

During the course of this study, it was found that one of the most popular genres among musical productions is the musical which combines elements of theatrical drama with musical numbers, choreography, and vocals. Musicals are quite widespread among large audiences due to the dynamism, accessibility in performance style through the integration of popular music culture, jazz, rock, etc., and visual appeal. Liao and Wang (2022) reached a similar conclusion. The authors emphasised that the introduction of popular singing techniques into musicals allows performers to create more authentic characters and provides greater emotional expressiveness. The researchers also pointed out that the use of these methods improves the perception of musicals by a wide audience, as these techniques are familiar to modern listeners and correspond to the aesthetic preferences.

One of the examples of Ukrainian musicals of the 21st century is the album-musical “You [Romance]” – which combines genre experimentation with deep historical and social content. Using contemporary musical forms, the production speaks of the previous times in the language of the present – making it comprehensible for new generations. By blending rap, documentary theatre, traditional motifs, and visual effects, this musical opens new possibilities for interpreting history and understanding its impact on the present. Similarly, in the work, Striy (2024) noted that these musical aims to provoke deep reflection on social and political processes through the example of the writers of the Executed Renaissance.

An example of the transformation of musical-theatrical genres in the 21st century is the opera-myth “Ukraine – Terra Incognita” (2023), which is not only a musical performance, but also a cultural message calling for the rethinking of traditions, intergenerational interaction, and the significance of national identity in the modern world. Through this opera, Ukrainian culture is not only preserved but also developed opening new horizons for studying, interpreting, and experiencing

folk heritage. Krokhmalnyy and Krokhmalna (2021) examined innovative approaches in Ukrainian theatrical art as a crucial element of national culture. Similarly, the authors focused on how contemporary concepts, such as the opera-myth, can become tools for expressing cultural identity and national memory. The opera-myth “Ukraine – Terra Incognita” (2023) serves as the central example on which the authors focused as a symbol of the struggle for national identity. The researchers noted that opera in which myths and symbolism act as carriers of cultural ideals is a powerful means of conveying ideology and shaping public consciousness, allowing for the creation of new narratives based on cultural and historical plots that hold significant value for society.

One of the examples of ballet productions is the ballet “Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors” (Sharamova, 2024) – the premiere of which at the Lviv National Opera became one of the greatest events of the theatre season due to its original interpretation of Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi’s classic work. In the production, neoclassical choreography combined with folk folklore and modern dance styles creates a new artistic language that not only reproduces the emotional and dramatic content of the story but also philosophically reflects on the theme of the struggle between the earthly and the divine, good and evil. Thus, it is not merely a ballet, but an entire artistic concept that engages the viewer in deep contemplation and the search for answers to the universal questions of human existence. In the study, Beniuk (2024) focused on the complexity and specificity of the choreography of “Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors” which is linked to the need to integrate national traditions and innovative approaches in the contemporary artistic space. The author of the study expressed the view that the success of the production depends on the choreographer’s ability to work not only with the dancers’ bodies but also with cultural heritage, ensuring its organic integration into the stage narrative. Thus, this study highlights the importance of preserving the authenticity of traditional movements and the ability to adapt these movements to modern choreographic and theatrical language in the context of ballet.

The results of the survey conducted among professionals and regular spectators of musical theatre revealed interesting trends in the perception of changes in genre approaches and performance interpretations. Most respondents noted that in the previous years, there has been a shift in the genre palette of productions indicating dynamic changes in the development of musical theatre in Ukraine. Openness to experimentation and new approaches such as the combination of classical forms with innovative ones is becoming a hallmark of modern productions (Kelmendi, 2024). Projects like Nova Opera, which actively experiment with genre forms and technologies, make an



important contribution to this process. For example, operas that combine different genres such as opera-ballet or opera-circus attract attention through the innovative approach to classical traditions. In the study, Sabri (2023) examined the role of the piano in the works of the Nova Opera musical-theatrical formation – which became known for its innovative approach to the creation of musical and theatrical projects. The author also emphasised the trend of combining traditional theatrical forms with modern musical techniques – which this formation actively develops.

A high level of performance mastery, as noted by respondents, has a significant impact on the perception of the production. In the work, Graham (2022) studied the role of the musical director in different contexts of musical-theatrical practice, in particular, on Broadway and local theatre stages. The author concluded that in the context of a major theatrical project, such as Broadway, the musical director plays a major role in creating an integrated musical process, where large-scale performance and organisational complexity must be taken into account. The necessity of a certain professional level to enhance the emotional connection between the performer and the audience was also underlined by Brook et al. (2024). Thus, this study highlights the importance of awareness in the field of music not only for performers but also for theatrical management.

The survey results showed that music, which is capable of enhancing the emotional effect, is one of the main factors determining the success of a performance. Similarly, in the study, von Germeten (2022) analysed the influence of different vocal preferences on the educational process in the field of musical theatre at higher education level. The author examined how students and teachers evaluate vocal styles and techniques and how these preferences influence teaching methods and the professional development of future musical theatre performers.

The findings of this study underscore the dynamic evolution of modern Ukrainian musical theatre, with a clear trend toward genre diversification and innovation. The incorporation of multimedia, new technologies, and experimental forms reflects a broader global movement in the performing arts, where traditional boundaries between genres are increasingly blurred. This trend aligns with international practices in musical theatre, where there has been a growing emphasis on synthesising classical and contemporary elements to create more immersive and emotionally engaging performances. The integration of genres such as opera-ballet, album-musical, and opera-myth, for example, demonstrates a creative fusion that mirrors global experiments in theatrical forms, allowing productions to resonate with diverse audiences.

In terms of musical style, the study reveals a shift towards the incorporation of popular genres like hip-hop, jazz, and electronic music alongside classical elements, mirroring a wider international trend in which musical theatre adapts to changing cultural and technological contexts. This fusion not only enhances the accessibility of performances but also attracts younger, tech-savvy audiences who are more attuned to contemporary musical trends. This approach mirrors the evolving nature of Western musical theatre, where such genre-crossing has been embraced as a way to broaden the appeal of theatre beyond traditional audiences. Moreover, the emotional depth and social relevance of contemporary productions, particularly in light of Ukraine's ongoing cultural transformations, highlight the growing role of theatre as a platform for reflecting on societal issues. This trend aligns with global movements in musical theatre, where productions increasingly serve as vehicles for social commentary and cultural dialogue, addressing pressing topics such as identity, conflict, and historical memory.

The results from the survey further affirm the strong connection between music, acting, and visual design in shaping the audience's emotional response, which corresponds with international expectations of musical theatre that emphasise the integration of these elements to create a holistic, immersive experience. The high level of interest in genre innovation, combined with a respect for traditional forms, suggests that contemporary audiences value both artistic evolution and the preservation of cultural heritage. This trend is reflective of the global dialogue within the performing arts community, where there is a recognition of the need to maintain cultural traditions while embracing new forms of expression to stay relevant in an ever-changing world.

In conclusion, the findings of this study reveal that Ukrainian musical theatre is actively participating in the broader international movement towards genre fusion and multimedia integration, while also maintaining a deep connection to its cultural roots. These trends are not only reflective of local transformations but also resonate with global developments in musical theatre, where experimentation, technology, and social relevance are becoming increasingly central to the art form.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The results of the research showed that genre diversity in contemporary musical theatre productions is a key element of the evolution reflecting the impact of cultural, social, and technological changes. Thanks to the integration of various styles and forms, musical performances have become open to experimentation, which, in turn, allows for the creation of new and engaging theatrical experiences

for audiences. The research highlighted those various genres, such as musical, opera, ballet, and musical performance, actively interact with each other, creating a whole palette of emotional and intellectual impressions. Music in such productions functions not only as background but also as a main element that supports the plot, develops characters, and deepens the atmosphere.

During the research, it was discovered that changes in the styles and forms of musical performances are often combined with cutting-edge technologies (visuals, lighting effects), which enables the creation of multimedia and interactive productions. Thus, modern musicals of the 21st century actively employ a variety of musical genres and technological innovations enabling the creation of unique theatrical experiences. In Ukraine, both classical traditions and new forms of theatrical art are actively developing, allowing for the preservation of national identity while simultaneously engaging with global theatrical trends. This research underlined the active development of opera and ballet genres, where the trend towards genre synthesis and the broadcasting of the Ukrainian idea is particularly evident.

As part of the study, a survey of 50 respondents was conducted, which demonstrated the importance of changes in genre approaches and performative interpretations in contemporary musical theatre. 72% of respondents noted changes in the genre palette of musical performances over the last five years indicating the dynamic development of this genre. For instance, the Nova Opera formation actively implements innovative approaches, combining classical genres with new experimental forms, such as the opera-requiem “IYOV” or the opera-circus “Babylon”. At the same time, 56% of respondents positively evaluated experimental performances that combine music, theatre, and multimedia – although 34% remained neutral. These response results point to an openness to new technologies – although there remains some resistance among conservative audiences. Moreover, respondents emphasised the importance of high-level performance skills (70% responded that it is very important for the perception of the performance). Within the survey, respondents also noted the necessity of combining traditional and innovative elements in productions which corresponds to current trends in the development of musical theatre in Ukraine. The survey highlighted that an important factor in the development of musical theatre is state support, new directorial approaches, and the expansion of the genre spectrum.

The research was limited by the small number of respondents (50) and the limited geographical location. Prospects for further research include expanding the sample, involving respondents from different regions of the country, and analysing a wider range of genres and performance formats

which in turn will allow for a deeper study of the impact of emerging trends on the development of musical theatre and on shaping audience tastes in the context of cultural change.

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## **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

Günümüz Ukrayna sahnesi, hem küresel sanatsal eğilimleri hem de ülkenin kendi sosyokültürel gerçeklerini yansıtan, güçlü bir müzik bileşeni içeren yapımları giderek daha fazla benimsemektedir. Bu çalışma, müziğin merkezi veya melez bir rol oynadığı modern Ukrayna sahne yapımlarında tür çeşitliliği ve sanatsal-imgesel içeriğin özelliklerini belirlemeyi ve sistematik hale getirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Son on yılda sahnelenen çok çeşitli performansları analiz ederek, araştırma sanatsal formların, tematik seçimlerin ve performatif stratejilerin tiyatro, müzik ve toplum arasındaki kültürel diyalogun şekillenmesine nasıl katkıda bulunduğunu aydınlatmaktadır. Araştırma metodolojisi, sanat ve müzikolojik analizi yapısal-anlamsal bir yaklaşımla birleştirmektedir. Bu metodolojik çerçeve, tür modellerinin tanımlanmasına ve bunların anlamsal ve sembolik boyutlarının yorumlanmasına olanak tanımaktadır. Ayrıca, içerik analizi, çağdaş yapımların temsili bir örneğinde tekrarlayan tematik kalıpları izlemek için kullanılır. Bu disiplinlerarası strateji, günümüz Ukrayna'sında müzikal tiyatronun estetik ve iletişimsel işlevlerine dengeli bir bakış açısı sağlar.

Analiz ilk olarak tür çeşitliliği konusunu ele almıştır. Bulgular, Ukrayna sahne sanatlarının hem geleneksel hem de yenilikçi biçimlere karşı dikkate değer bir açıklık sergilediğini göstermektedir. Müzikaller, operalar, operetler ve baleler, yerleşik tiyatro ve müzik gelenekleriyle sürekliliği koruyarak öne çıkmaya devam etmektedir. Ancak son yıllarda, formlar arasındaki sınırları kasıtlı olarak bulanıklaştıran deneysel sentezlerde de bir artış görülmüştür. Bu tür melezleri, opera unsurlarını senfonik eylem, konuşmalı tiyatro veya multimedya enstalasyonlarıyla birleştirerek, izleyiciyi çeşitli duyuşal düzeylerde etkileyen katmanlı performanslar yaratabilir. Bu çeşitlilik, yalnızca estetik denemeleri değil, aynı zamanda çağdaş deneyimin karmaşıklığını ele alabilen yeni sanatsal dillerin aktif bir şekilde aranmasını da yansıtmaktadır.

Bu müzikal sahne yapımlarının tematik yönelimi de aynı derecede önemlidir. Çalışma, mevcut kültürel manzarayı tanımlayan birkaç baskın eğilimi belirlemektedir. Eserlerin önemli bir kısmı ulusal kimlik, tarihsel hafıza ve kültürel mirasın keşfine odaklanmaktadır. Ukrayna edebiyat klasikleri, halk öyküleri ve mitolojik motiflere dayanan performanslar, köklere, geleneklere ve kolektif deneyimlere yeniden ilgi duyulduğunu vurgulamaktadır. Bu eğilim, siyasi ve sosyal çalkantıların yaşandığı dönemlerde ulusal özgüven bağlamında özellikle belirgin olmuştur.

Bir diğer önemli tematik çizgi ise akut sosyal sorunlarla ilgilenmektir. Yapımlar sıklıkla savaş ve sonuçlarını, yerinden edilme ve göçün travmasını ve değişen sosyokültürel koşullarda bireyin



anlam arayışını ele almaktadır. Ukrayna'nın yakın tarihindeki çatışmalar ve dönüşümler göz önüne alındığında, bu tür temalar izleyicilerde derin bir yankı uyandırmaktadır. Müzik ve performans aracılığıyla, bu eserler kolektif endişeleri ve özlemleri dile getirerek, yansıma, empati ve dayanıklılık için bir alan sağlamaktadır. Önemli olarak, tematik vurgu, müzikal tiyatronun sadece eğlence olarak değil, aynı zamanda bir tür sosyal yorum ve kültürel tanıklık olarak da işlev gördüğünü göstermektedir.

Çalışma, çağdaş Ukrayna müzikal yapımlarının karakteristik performans yaklaşımlarını da incelemektedir. Yönetmenler ve besteciler, geleneksel vokal-enstrümantal formları yenilikçi sahneleme çözümleriyle birleştirme eğilimindedir. Dijital senografi ve projeksiyon haritalamadan video sanatı ve canlı yayın görsellerinin entegrasyonuna kadar çok çeşitli multimedya teknolojileri yaygın olarak kullanılmaktadır. Bu teknolojiler, prodüksiyonların ifade kapasitesini genişletmekte ve daha dinamik bir hikaye anlatımına olanak sağlamaktadır. Seyircinin doğrudan katılımını içeren etkileşimli stratejiler de giderek yaygınlaşmakta, geleneksel sanatçı-seyirci ilişkisini yeniden şekillendirmekte ve katılımcı bir tiyatro kültürünü teşvik etmektedir.

Müzikal yenilikler de aynı derecede dikkat çekicidir. Besteciler ve ses tasarımcıları, klasik orkestrasyon ile elektronik müziği sıklıkla harmanlayarak, çağdaş yaşamın kültürel melezliğini yansıtan melez ses manzaraları yaratmaktadır. Bu füzyon, işitsel paleti zenginleştirmekle kalmaz, aynı zamanda Ukrayna yapımlarını küresel sanatsal diyalogların içine yerleştirir. Koreografi ve hareket tasarımı da belirleyici bir rol oynar ve genellikle vokal ve enstrümantal unsurlarla eşit öneme sahiptir. Çalışma, halk dansları ve çağdaş hareket uygulamalarından beslenen koreografik yapıların dramaturjiye nasıl katkıda bulunduğunu ve sahnede tematik gerilimleri somutlaştırmaya nasıl yardımcı olduğunu vurgulamaktadır.

Sahnografi, prodüksiyonların genel etkisini şekillendirmede önemli bir bileşen olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Ukraynalı yönetmenler, esnek sahne tasarımları, sembolik imgeler ve kinetik sahne unsurları kullanarak görsel dramaturjiye büyük önem vermektedir. Bu tür sahnografik stratejiler, performansların anlatı ve duygusal boyutlarını güçlendirerek görsel ve müzikal unsurları tutarlı bir bütün halinde bir araya getirmektedir. Koreografi ile birlikte sahnografi, çağdaş sahne sanatının intermedyal doğasını vurgulamaktadır.

Bu bulguların önemi, Ukrayna'da müzikal tiyatronun daha geniş kültürel rolünde yatmaktadır. Çağdaş prodüksiyonlar eğlendirmekten daha fazlasını yapar; geleneksel formları yenilemek, tiyatronun sanatsal kelime dağarcığını zenginleştirmek ve daha geniş ve çeşitli izleyici kitleleri

üzerinde etkisini genişletmek için bir araç görevi görürler. Geçmiş ile bugün, gelenek ile yenilik, birey ile topluluk arasında bir diyalogu kolaylaştırır. Böylelikle, sanatçı ile toplum arasında etkili bir iletişim aracı olarak tiyatronun rolünü güçlendirirler.

Dahası, bu çalışma, bu performansların güncel kültürel ve sosyal süreçlerin bir aynası olduğunu göstermektedir. Müzik, anlatı ve performans teknolojilerini bir araya getiren Ukrayna müzikal tiyatrosu, dönüşüm dönemlerinde kolektif deneyimin karmaşıklığını yakalamaktadır. Katkısı sadece estetik yeniliklerde değil, kültürel direnç ve kimliğin güçlendirilmesinde de yatmaktadır.

Sonuç olarak, araştırma, müzik unsuruna sahip çağdaş Ukrayna sahne yapımlarının tür çeşitliliği, tematik zenginliği ve performatif deneyimselliğinin dinamik ve gelişen bir sanat pratiği alanı olduğunu vurgulamaktadır. Bu yapımlar, ulusal geleneklerle sürekliliği ve küresel etkilere açıklığı bir arada barındırmaktadır. Müzikal tiyatronun kültürel kimliği ifade etme, acil sosyal sorunlarla ilgilenme ve sanatın iletişim potansiyelini genişletme konusunda merkezi rolünü teyit etmektedirler. Bu çalışma, Ukrayna tiyatrosunun gelişen manzarasını anlamaya katkıda bulunmakta ve kültürel söylemi şekillendirmede müzik temelli performansların daha geniş anlamını vurgulamaktadır, toplumsal değişim süreçlerine etkisi ve küresel kültürel etkileşimdeki önemini ortaya koymaktadır.