



Research Article

The Ukrainian Women Artists with Their Weapon project as a transcultural artistic action in wartime

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Abstract

The Ukrainian Women Artists with Their Weapons (UWATW) project, a brainchild of Karmella Tsepkolenko, is a unique artistic endeavor that brings together female composers and poets. A direct response to the war in Ukraine, this project fuses a national context with transculturality, as evidenced by its significant global impact. It comprises five vocal-instrumental works, all centered around a single thematic idea: reflection during the war. The main research questions of the article include the impact of the war on transcultural processes, defining the main aspects of the project that reflect transculturality, and the interaction of collective authorship with individuality in contemporary artistic trends. Transculturalism, as a manifestation of globalization and decolonization, plays a crucial role in forming new cultural identities, rethinking traditions, and supporting cultural exchanges. This concept emphasizes significant technologies for transcultural connections, remaining a practical tool for researchers and artists to deepen mutual understanding in a globalized world. The project UWATW showcases the interaction of cultures through the collaboration of artists from diverse backgrounds and cultural codes. The project participants represent regional and national centers, influencing the creative methodology of working with musical and poetic texts. The works in the project embody a strong life-affirming impulse, promote intercultural exchange, and draw attention to transnational issues related to the war. Thus, the UWATW project illuminates significant issues of identity and artistic expression during wartime. It demonstrates the capacity of contemporary art to express national ideas, serve as an instrument of cultural resistance, and provide a platform for intercultural exchange, uniting people and preserving cultural values in the challenging conditions of war.

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Introduction

One of the consequences of war is the forced displacement and migration of people, resulting in cultural exchange and interaction between nations, creating conditions for the implementation of transcultural practices. Responding to the war events and Russia's attempts to destroy cultural institutions and remove artifacts, Ukrainian artists, regardless of their current location, strive to preserve their identity and reflect their intentions through creativity, conveying them through artistic expression to the international community. Thus, contemporary Ukrainian compositional creativity is

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experiencing a new stage of development, triggered by the tragic events of early 2022—the outbreak of Russia’s full-scale war against Ukraine. In this context, expressing personal experiences, thoughts, and civic positions has become necessary to convey a society’s primary senses and messages in force majeure circumstances. Moreover, creativity may be the only way to transmit what cannot be expressed in words and to be heard beyond one’s cultural space. This emphasizes transculturality, which has resulted from forced intercultural interaction and exchange.

Backgrounds

Specific musical projects created after February 24, 2022, have already become iconic and gained widespread recognition even abroad. Such works, written in 2022 and performed worldwide, include “City of Mary” by Zoltan Almashi, a piece dedicated to the tragedies of Mariupol, and “Lacrimosa” by Victoria Poleva, dedicated to the events in Bucha (these are orchestral works). Also notable is Yevhen Orkin’s cantata, “Daddy’s Book,” dedicated to the memory of children’s writer Volodymyr Vakulenko, who was murdered by the occupiers in Izium. Dmytro Radzetskyi’s performative project “Ukraine on Fire” (2024) has gained wide dissemination, using multimedia capabilities to unite many world musicians in various geographical locations, demonstrating their solidarity with Ukrainians and drawing the world’s attention to the war and the need to help Ukraine. Of course, it is essential to mention the work of one of the foremost presenters of contemporary Ukrainian music, Yevhen Stankovych, who composed a large-scale orchestral-choral piece titled “Ukraine. Music of War” with a libretto by Vasyl Vovkun.

Within the array of these remarkable works, a special project emerges, titled “Ukrainian Women Artists with Their Weapons.” The initial concept of this project was to channel personal experiences and emotions into artistic expression. However, as it evolved, it resonated deeply in the transcultural sphere, and the emotional intensity conveyed by the musical works of this project remains profoundly relevant today.

Research Questions

“Ukrainian Women Artists with Their Weapons” is an original artistic project with no analogs in Ukrainian wartime compositional creativity. It conveys meanings that exist at the level of the broader cultural space, as evidenced by the demand and performances of the project. Therefore, the main research questions are as follows:

How does the war affect transcultural processes?

What are the manifestations of transculturality in the project “Ukrainian Women Artists with Their Weapons”?

How are transcultural processes reflected in contemporary trends in art?

How does collective authorship correlate with individuality in the context of contemporary transcultural trends, and how is this reflected in the structure and artistic concept of the work?

Method

The study employs a deductive approach, as understanding the entirety of the project sets goals for deepening, studying, and detailing each component. An inductive approach, compiling the significant substantive-creative, expressive, and cultural-social elements identified during deductive deepening, transforms the holistic view of the project and expands its prospects. Additionally, the study uses a comparative method to compare the creative approaches and working methods of the composers who participated in the project. The cultural analysis allowed for examining the project in the context of contemporary sociocultural events and processes, which contributed to understanding its place in the pan-European cultural space and transcultural processes. A key aspect is the analysis of the historical context in which the project was created, particularly the impact of the war on cultural processes in Ukraine and the role of art in preserving and disseminating national identity. These methods enabled a comprehensive analysis of the “Ukrainian Women Artists with Their Weapons” project, revealing its main artistic and conceptual features.

This integrative methodology aligns with modern trends in cultural studies, where there is an increasing blend of humanities and sciences. Pavel Zgrzebnicki notes that “*the traditional division into science and humanities is becoming blurred... shedding new light on basic problems in cultural studies*” (Zgrzebnicki, 2017, p. 64). The combination of deductive, inductive, and comparative approaches reflects the need for integrative, synthetic research, as emphasized by

Uzakbayeva and Beisembayeva, who argue that cultural studies encompass both cultural and logical dimensions (Uzakbayeva & Beisembayeva, 2015).

Moreover, the recognition of complementary epistemological and methodological approaches is vital. Fonseca et al. stress the value of diverse methods to achieve a deeper understanding of cultural elements and their influence (Fonseca et al., 2017). This comprehensive approach not only contextualizes the “Ukrainian Women Artists with Their Weapons” project within broader cultural frameworks but also highlights its role in preserving national identity amidst Ukraine’s wartime context.

Introducing Project

“Ukrainian Women Artists with Their Weapons” is a collective project whose authors are exclusively women—composers and poets. This cycle consists of five vocal-instrumental works of similar scale, written for the same ensemble and united by a single thematic idea: reflecting on the onset of the war. The project formed gradually but very rapidly. The decisive factor in the emergence of this creative phenomenon was the position of the project’s author, composer Karmella Tsepkolenko, the creative director of the contemporary art festival “Two Days and Two Nights.” The project was conceived at the very beginning of the full-scale invasion, performed by the modern music ensemble Senza Sforzando (comprising Tetiana Muliar—soprano, Yevhen Dovbysh—cello, and Oleksandr Perepelytsia—piano), and initially planned as a virtual project intended for online video broadcasting. However, it quickly transitioned to live concert performances and has been presented multiple times in Ukraine and abroad, receiving significant resonance, underscoring its openness and relevance.



Figure 1. Ensemble Senza Sforzando (Tetiana Muliar—soprano, Evhen Dovbysh—cello and Oleksandr Perepelytsia—piano, artistic director). Humboldtssaal, Freiburg (from Karmella Tsepkolenko’s archive)

Live presentations of the project took place in 2022 in Kyiv at the “Kyiv Music Fest” ([URL 1](#)), in Lviv at the “Contrasts” festival ([URL 2](#)), and on Latvian Radio in a program dedicated to Ukraine ([URL 3](#)). The project was also showcased at an international conference at the University of Heidelberg (Germany). In 2023, it was presented live at the “Two Days and Two Nights of New Music” festival ([URL 4](#)) in Odesa. 2024, it was presented at the Gemm scientific seminar at the Sorbonne University in Paris and in Freiburg, Germany, at the “Sound against the War” event.

The “Ukrainian Women Artists with Their Weapons” project stands out with its unique goal—to use artistic means to convey the painful meanings that Ukraine currently lives by to a wide, primarily European audience. This cohesive and artistically balanced project is not just a collection of works, but a single cyclic work with a certain dramaturgical development, featuring leit-timbres, leitmotifs, climactic zones, and zones of detachment.

Introducing Authors

The project involved five contemporary female composers located in different cities and indirectly involved five female poets whose poems these composers turned to. The composers were inspired by a common idea, a particular goal, and the project's central message—to show our spirit's resilience and strength and demonstrate that we continue to live despite the enormous danger and psychological tension. In artistic form, they also aimed to convey to the listener the inexpressible pain of the Ukrainian people, which everyone has experienced and continues to experience today while reinforcing moral resilience and an unwavering will to victory.

Karmella Tsepkenko, the initiator of the project, is a renowned Ukrainian artist, laureate of the Shevchenko National Prize, Honored Artist of Ukraine, the author of the idea, founder, and artistic director of the annual International Festival of Contemporary Art “Two Days and Two Nights of New Music.” She is the initiator, founder, and Chair of the Board of the International Public Organization “Association New Music”—the Ukrainian section of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM). She is also a professor and head of the Department of Music Theory and Composition at the Odesa National A.V. Nezhdanova Academy of Music (2009, composition). Additionally, she serves as the Secretary of the Board of the National Union of Composers of Ukraine. Tsepkenko is the author of numerous works (over 100), including seven symphonies, four operas, and various chamber works. She has released 12 CDs with her compositions.



Figure 2. *Bernhard Wulff* (president of the festival *Two Days and Two Nights of New Music*), *Karmella Tsepkenko* (artistic director of the festival *Two Days and Two Nights of New Music*) in Humboldtsaal, Freiburg (from Karmella Tsepkenko's archive)

Hanna Kopyika is a composer of the younger generation and a member of the Union of Composers. She studied in Yulia Gomelskaya's class and pursued postgraduate studies under Serhiy Shustov. Kopyika holds two degrees—one in music and one in mathematics—and successfully combines these two fields simultaneously. As a composer, she has presented her works at leading Ukrainian festivals and in Poland. She also teaches at the Department of Music Theory and Composition at the Odesa Music Academy.

Asmati Chibalashvili, a Ukrainian composer of Georgian descent. She received her education in Odesa in the class of Karmella Tsepkenko and pursued postgraduate studies at the National Music Academy in Kyiv in the class of Yevhen

Stankovych. Since then, Asmati Chibalashvili has lived and worked in Kyiv, maintaining strong ties with the Odesa creative community and developing Ukrainian-Georgian creative relations. Her works are performed both in Ukraine and abroad, and she has represented Ukraine at the international plenary session of the World New Music Days ISCM in Vancouver.

Kira Maidenbergh-Todorova, a Ukrainian composer and pianist, has made a significant mark in the world of contemporary classical music. Her talent has been recognized with the prestigious Levko Revutsky National Prize. Her compositions, spanning chamber, choral, piano, and symphonic music, have been showcased at national events in Ukraine and across the globe, including in France, Germany, Lithuania, and other countries.

Alla Zagaykevych is a renowned composer known far beyond the borders of Ukraine. She combines work in academic concert genres (opera, symphonic, chamber, electroacoustic music, chamber opera) with contemporary multidisciplinary projects (audiovisual installations, performances, music for films, and theatrical productions). Alla Zagaykevych studied at the Kyiv State Conservatory under Professor Yuri Ishchenko (1985–1990) and later at the Institute for Research and Coordination in Acoustics/Music (IRCAM) in Paris (1995–1996). She has also received numerous awards for her film scores.

Parts of the whole

“Reading History” by Karmella Tsepkolenko based on the poetry of Oksana Zabuzhko

The composer chose a poetic text from the well-known and long-written works of the renowned Ukrainian poet and public figure Oksana Zabuzhko to work on the piece. The composer used this text in its entirety without any abridgment. Karmella Tsepkolenko wrote cantata “Reading History” in March 2022 in Odesa. It was an agitated and dreadful time—Russian forces were advancing on all fronts, Odesa was under constant rocket attacks and threat of occupation, and most of the time had to be spent in bomb shelters. In these conditions, as a reaction to the war, the composer conceived the idea of creating a concert program featuring works by Ukrainian women composers under the motto “Ukrainian Women Artists with Their Weapons.”

In Oksana Zabuzhko’s poem, two philosophical categories are addressed—eternity and temporality. The first belongs to the greatness and power, the glory and the name of a great state that has earned it through its achievements. The second concerns conquerors, who, for a time, become the owners of a certain territory. This is why every invader tries to engrave their name at any cost, so as not to disappear forever from the pages of history. The poem uses eternal symbols—such as the Colosseum, Rome, and the Barbarian—to draw significant parallels with contemporary times. The composer drew a parallel with Ukraine, as Ukraine, like Rome, has been repeatedly subjected to invasions. No matter how strong and powerful the adversaries were, the state always emerged victorious and defended its name. The achievements of each country testify to its wealth and history, so no “barbarian” can erase its memories from history. This connection between the past and the present in the composition is a testament to its timelessness and relevance.

The musical score is written using contemporary compositional techniques, a significant aspect that adds a layer of intrigue to the piece. In its form, it resembles a mini-mono-opera, as the vocal part is significantly saturated with psychological and dramatic elements. Solo episodes for the cello and piano are of great importance, emerging at the peaks of dramatic events and serving as connective material to enhance the dramatic narrative of the cantata. The composer employs the technique of musical “compression of time,” where events that cannot be sequentially laid out in the cantata’s text are reflected in instrumental intermezzos. In other words, the instrumental episodes continue the unfolding of the plot, expressing the meaning embedded between the lines. One could say that the vocal part narrates past history, while the role of the instrumentalists is to depict contemporary chronicles.

The composer removes all elements of ornamentation and external effects, focusing her attention on the development of drama in its psychological and emotional aspects. However, at the beginning of the work, Karmella Tsepkolenko incorporates a performative effect. The vocalist reads Oksana Zabuzhko’s poem without music, literally reading the history, and then the piece is performed by all the musicians. This combination of the mundane and the distinctly staged space aims to enhance the meaning embedded in the poem. We emphasized at the beginning that in this

project, the poetic text is more than just poetry used by the composers for her works; it is a significant component of the conceptual content.

To emphasize the expressiveness of the psychological drama and the performativity, the piece includes snare drum strikes in the vocal part. In the piano part, to achieve specific sonorous resonances, the composer uses a metal ruler placed in the high register of the keyboard at certain moments. Additionally, to highlight the feelings of horror, the vocal part employs unconventional sound production techniques, and in the instrumental parts, key thematic moments are accentuated with ostinato verbal recitations. These recitations echo, enhancing the psychological impact on the listener.

The piece also exists in a German translation (the poem's text was translated by its author, Oksana Zabuzhko, with the assistance of Rupert Bergmann). This version was performed on November 9, 2022, at Stadtgalerie Möding (Vienna) in the staged concert program "War–Peace" by the Austrian ensemble consisting of Rupert Bergmann (bass-baritone), Tzveta Dimitrova (piano), and Stefan Teufert (cello), where the world premiere of the German version of the cantata "Geschichte Lesen" / "Reading History" took place ([URL 5](#)).



Figure 3. Ensemble Senza Sforzando and *Karmella Tsepkolenko*, Lviv National Philharmonic (from Karmella Tsepkolenko's archive)

"Feelings-2022" by Hanna Kopiika based on the poetry of Lina Kostenko

For the textual embodiment, the composer, Hanna Kopiika, demonstrated her profound understanding of the dialectic of opposing experiences by choosing two poems by the iconic Ukrainian poet Lina Kostenko. Her cantata, therefore, consists of two parts. The first poem, "And Horror, and Blood, and Death, and Despair," was written in the early days of the full-scale invasion of Russia. The second poem, "Wings," was written back in 1958. Kopiika found a way to embody the contrasting experiences in a masterful manner. The composer herself notes that the first "musical" part of the work, "And Horror, and Blood," was written around the time when photos of the devastated Borodyanka and the rescued people and animals who survived were circulating on the internet. One of these photos became the impetus for creating the semantics of contempt and disgust towards the aggressor.

The first part of the composition is saturated with frequent repetitions and deliberately unnatural phrase elongations, enhancing the effect of repulsion. Glissando and noise instrumental effects, imitating distant explosion sounds, are actively used. However, the second part of the composition unexpectedly changes both the content and musical sound, taking the audience on a contrasting emotional journey. The text of the poem carries a very positive and optimistic message, which in today's conditions feels even more poignant: it glorifies the spiritual aspirations of a person, celebrates life, and emphasizes the necessity of having goals and desires, without which life loses its meaning. Interestingly, Lina Kostenko wrote this poem while in Poland, longing for her homeland; the "wings" symbolize the aspiration to achieve

a cherished goal. Musically, the second part is composed in such a way that its sonority is on a constant path of enlightenment and relief, which starkly contrasts with the first part of the work.

After the first chord, the soprano immediately enters with a lyrical melisma, complemented by the cello with an extended, beautiful melody that accompanies the vocal part for a long time. In the piano, we can hear soft chords interspersed with quiet and gentle cascades of sound. All of this creates an effect of soaring and upliftment, which gradually acquires bright pathos towards the end. This embodies an indomitable optimism and positive thinking that withstands any circumstances. This piece can be considered the lyrical culmination of the project.



Figure 4. Tetiana Muliar and Oleksandr Perepelytsia, Lviv National Philharmonic (from Karmella Tsepkenko's archive)

“With Faith in Ukraine” by Asmati Chibalashvili based on the poetry of Yulia Dmytrenko-Despotashvili

The composer's selection of poems for her work was a deeply personal and emotional journey. The poems, penned by a Ukrainian poet residing in Georgia, were not specifically crafted for the project but were a reflection of the war events in April 2022. These poems, resonating with the composer's own experiences, infused the music with a unique and profound emotionality.

This poem depicts and portrays a scene of bombed and abandoned homes whose windows will never be a welcoming light again. The allegorical and painful lines that describe snow falling as salvation are particularly touching. However, while the poem's first part describes the horrors of war, the second part has a more optimistic tone. It expresses an unwavering belief that the people of Ukraine will survive all trials, and the country itself, after going through hell, will undoubtedly flourish and become even better. In the music, the composer also uses additional percussion and percussive techniques in the piano part. Recitation is actively used during the most poignant lines of the poetic text. In the vocal melody, we can hear the intonations of a soothing lullaby. The piercing intonations of the cello part are aimed at conveying two meanings—transmitting emotional experiences and imitating a moan.

Asmati Chibalashvili chooses an attractive artistic solution to conclude the piece. Unlike other parts of the project, despite the optimistic final lines of the poem, the music does not move towards enlightenment but becomes more dramatic. The lyrical aspect recedes into the background, and the final lines are filled with determination, activity, and readiness to fight. The piece ends with strikes on the piano strings, which the composer also uses to imitate the echoes of explosions. Thanks to this artistic decision at the end of the composition, this piece can be considered the dramatic culmination of the project.

“My beloved...” by Kira Maidenbergh-Todorova based on the poetry of Valeria Zhigalina

The poetry by Valeria Zhigalina is the only one written explicitly for this project at the composer’s request. The poem has no title, and its content can be understood in two directions. The author addresses her “beloved,” sympathizes with her, and shares her loss and pain. The image of the “beloved one” is very abstract; she could be a daughter, sister, granddaughter, friend, or simply an unknown girl who has been tormented and mutilated. However, we understand that this image is allegorical and represents Ukraine, whom the author calls her dear one. Therefore, the phrase “My beloved” was chosen as the piece’s title.

The poem’s climax is highly expressive, describing the repulsiveness of contemporary Russian military symbols, which have been branded in everyone who has suffered from the war. Thus, this piece conveys the emotions that Ukrainians were experiencing at that time—horror, fear, pain, rage, uncertainty about the future, a sense of losing something significant, and, despite everything, an indomitable hope for a better future. That is why Valeria Zhigalina’s poem also ends with the hope that everything will pass, and just as a new star rises each time, a new peaceful life will dawn in Ukraine.

Speaking of the musical expressive elements, the structure of the piece is continuous, with the character of the music fully following the emotional state of the text and having a clear climax. The main protagonist in the ensemble is, of course, the singer. However, the pianist’s part can be interpreted as expressing the inner state of the heroine, while the cellist’s part echoes the external circumstances. An essential element is the initial rhythmic percussive feature, which the composer also incorporated but is assigned to the pianist. This is a rather declarative expressive device that reflects the heart’s beating. The vocal and cello parts also actively use Glissando intonations and moan imitations.

“Signs of Presence...” by Alla Zagaykevych based on the poetry of Iya Kiva

The composition by Alla Zagaykevych, a unique collaboration with the young and esteemed Ukrainian poet Iya Kiva, is a part of the compelling project “Ukrainian Women Artists with Their Weapons.” The piece is a musical interpretation of Kiva’s poems, carefully selected from her various collections published after 2018.

The poet Iya Kiva was born in Donetsk and was forced to move to Kyiv in 2014 with the onset of the occupation. Alla Zagaykevych’s piece “Signs of Presence,” included in the project, is a second version of a previously written work by the composer. The earlier version was created for a solo performance by vocalist Victoria Vitrenko, who accompanied her singing with piano playing. For the “Ukrainian Women Artists with Their Weapons” project, a cello part was added to the piece, and the performative effect initially embedded in the work was diminished. However, this does not make the piece any less interesting or relevant to wartime events, and it elevates the project to a broader level of significance and generality. It primarily depicted the sense of anxiety and the foreboding of a military catastrophe, which owes much to the symbolic meanings embedded in the poetic lines. The text of the poetry does not directly depict war events but conveys their feelings very accurately.

The text is highly symbolic and vivid, encompassing death, emptiness, abandonment, pain, and suffering. The piece consists of four parts. In the first part, static elements dominate, depicting a life frozen in ruins, where everything resembles a terrible dream, with the most unpleasant episode continuously repeating. The second part of the piece reflects emotions that take one’s breath away. This is vividly portrayed in the vocal part. The depiction of the distortion of everything that was once dear and loved is compared to a dirty duck flapping between the shoulder blades. The vocal part is rich in specific techniques, such as very soft singing, falsetto, gliding, and wailing. This is an expressive type of singing that does not attempt to showcase the most beautiful aspects of human nature but instead emphasizes the primal, wild, and, at first glance, anti-aesthetic qualities of the voice.

In the third part, Alla Zagaykevych employs her favorite vocal technique—turning to the folk open manner of singing. This radically changes the timbral plane and significantly raises the tone of emotional tension. This is the climactic part. The text speaks about the metamorphosis of transformation from one state to another. The singing emphasizes the meaning of this part, which is embedded in its final lines—to learn to seek the roots of life that do not yet know what to call themselves. It underscores the highly relevant current state of the revival of national roots through painful resistance.

The final, fourth part of the piece returns to the initial state of uncertainty and moral exhaustion, which, after the climactic phase, feels more organic and unified. The composer seemingly dissects the poetic text and becomes secondary. It is not easy to understand the text's pronunciation/articulation during the singing. This indicates that the composer prioritized the feelings and associations evoked by the poetry over its verbal content. Thus, the piece features many fragmented phrases, gasps for breath, emotional outbursts, and a sense of being lost. The vocal part becomes a crucial sonorous component of the composition, a new instrumental timbre.

The national context of the project “Ukrainian Women Artists with Their Weapon”

The contemporary art project is not only the result of an original plan. However, it is also a unique combination of coordinated actions to achieve specific cultural and aesthetic-artistic goals. *Kostiantyn Davydovskyi* identifies the following indicators of a contemporary art project in the national context, the first of which is “*The birth of a new progressive artistic concept that corresponds with the national idea of the Ukrainian people.*” (Davydovskyi, 2013, p. 161). He further notes that there must be a precedent of historical “excess”—the disclosure of a previously unknown but significant fact capable of engaging the cultural and artistic community or the birth of a fundamentally new, relevant, and contemporary concept of a cultural event. This is an indisputable situation. Among other things, it is noted that an art project must have a leader—an extraordinary creative personality capable of generating a new artistic idea and creating a team of like-minded individuals, spreading and promoting the leading idea of the project over a long period.

Theoretical and Historical Aspects of Transculturalism

Transculturalism as a philosophical and aesthetic thought direction emerged at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries. It is associated with globalization processes oriented towards a transnational cultural orientation for the pan-European markets. Researchers interpret the phenomenon of transculturalism by seeing its origins from the following points of view. Thus, the first group of studies includes works that link this phenomenon with decolonization processes. Fernando Ortiz first introduced transculturalism to define a new stage in the relations between decolonized peoples and former empires. The researcher identified two stages of transculturation: loss or uprooting (deculturation) and the creation of a new culture (neoculturation), corresponding to destruction and creativity, respectively (Ortiz, 1995, p. 140). Anne Ring Petersen reinforces this position by examining the impact of migration on the identity of the migrating individual as well as the community in which the migrant resides and the influence of these processes on the art world on the path to the contemporary “global art,” which, in turn, changes cultures, institutions, and global geopolitics (Petersen, 2017).

Another perspective is related to the process of unifying the socio-cultural space, focusing on the individual characteristics and needs of the person. M. Epstein notes that “...*transculturalism takes up the torch from multiculturalism. Multiculturalism paves the way from the dominance of one canon to the diversity of cultures. Transculturalism moves from the diversity of cultures to the even greater diversity of individuals, transcending their rigid cultural identities*” (Epstein, 2009, p. 349). M. P. Trebin and T. O. Chernyshova deepen this understanding by arguing that the phenomenon of transculturalism and, accordingly, transculturation in the context of contemporary socio-cultural reality is “...*a new way of social and linguistic thinking, generating new relationships between cultures and languages, a new understanding of modern communication*” (Trebin and Chernyshova, 2014, p. 17).

In the article “Transculturalism and Translation: New Approaches to Cultural Contact Zones,” Hermione Giffard (Giffard, 2016) explores the definition and application of transcultural in the context of historical and cultural studies. Giffard highlights transculturalism as a response to globalization, focusing on how cultures interact, blend, and influence each other. The author emphasizes the metaphor of “translation” as central to understanding transcultural interactions, suggesting that cultures do not simply mix but also actively transform borrowed elements in a process that is both creative and destructive. Overall, Giffard sees transculturalism as a valuable framework for studying cultural interactions but stresses the need for more explicit definitions and practical applications. J. Lewis understands the concept of “transculturality” as integrating “political aesthetics” with cultural citizenship. The researcher connects the transcultural vision with a postmodernist approach (Lewis, 2002, p. 17). Continuing the line of J. Lewis, T. Humeniuk introduces the category of transculturality as “a defining characteristic of the phenomenon of postmodernism, interpreting postmodernism as a situation in culture that closes the historical circle of the late 20th and early 21st

centuries.” The researcher interprets postmodernism as a transcultural phenomenon, relying on an interdisciplinary approach. Thus, we conclude that transculturalism has two main prerequisites: the processes of human migration, which can occur voluntarily, involuntarily, or by force, resulting in interaction and cultural exchange between different ethnic groups. Another important factor influencing the process of transculturation is globalization processes and the widespread dissemination of new technologies, allowing artists from other parts of the world to unite and create joint projects. This is confirmed by the research of V. N. Sudakova, who states,

“Internet culture forms a universal awareness among representatives of almost all social and cultural communities on the planet. The unique scale of information accessibility leads to familiarity, adaptation, and use of a vast array of transcultural achievements: technology, gadgets, etiquette norms, clothing, and items that are equally significant for all cultural systems on the planet” ... “exclusive and professional vocabulary, vulgarisms, and jargon. All these are transcultural values and, simultaneously, the field of possible understanding and cultural mutual recognition” (Sudakova, 2019, p. 24).

Thus, transculturalism, having formed at the intersection of globalization trends and decolonization processes, occupies a key place in contemporary philosophical and aesthetic thought. It is viewed as a dynamic phenomenon that fosters the creation of new cultural identities through the creative interpretation and reinterpretation of cultural traditions. This perspective emphasizes not only migratory movements and sociocultural exchanges but also the importance of technologies in shaping transcultural connections. Through a comprehensive understanding of artistic processes that transcend national and ethnic boundaries, transculturalism serves not merely as a theoretical concept but as a practical tool for researchers, artists, and educational institutions, encouraging deeper mutual understanding and cultural enrichment in today’s globalized world.

Transcultural dimensions of the project “Ukrainian Women Artists with Their Weapon”

The interaction of cultures within the framework of the project “Ukrainian Women Artists with Their Weapons,” focusing on current events in Ukraine, reflects its transcultural dimension. This happens through the collaboration of artists from different backgrounds and cultural codes. In this context, it is worth noting that the participants in the project—representatives of the Ukrainian compositional school—present two branches of professional-regional national centers: Odesa and Kyiv, which somewhat influences the creative methodology of working with musical and poetic texts. Moreover, some of the composers have different ethnic roots and, accordingly, various cultural perspectives, which also contribute to the enrichment of their creative views on events. For instance, Karmella Tsepkenko has Armenian roots, Asmati Chibalashvili is of Georgian descent, and Kira Maidenbergh-Todorova has a Jewish heritage. Each national branch carries a corresponding genetic code of memory of events resonant with the current tragedy. Today, their unification in creativity through the creation of a comprehensive, coherent project reflecting a shared experience speaks to a cultural fusion spurred by the Russian-Ukrainian war. The collective authorship of the project emphasizes the importance of collaboration and interaction among artists, enriching creative ideas and artistic concepts. This aligns with the broader understanding of transcultural collaboration, which is described as “communication between people with different cultural backgrounds, including the communication between countries, groups, and individuals... essential to the prosperity of culture and social development” (Zhang, 2021, p.72). Each composer maintains her individuality while contributing to creating a unified cyclic work. This indicates a harmonious blend of individual and collective elements, an essential aspect of transculturality.

On the other hand, the project has become an act of creative self-expression and an active form of cultural resistance. The works included in it contain a robust life-affirming impulse. With a national context relevant to current events, the project promotes intercultural exchange through its universal artistic language. War is a transnational issue today, requiring immediate resolution by all available means.

Conclusion

War significantly intensifies transcultural processes as artistic practices developed under its influence often transcend national boundaries and engage the international community in dialogue. The “Ukrainian Women Artists with Their Weapons” project is a vivid example of this phenomenon, where national experience is combined with universal artistic means to express values and ideas familiar to humanity. The project’s transculturality is evident not only in the themes of the works but also in the methods the authors use to create deep symbolic connections between different cultures. Among the participants in the project are composers of various national origins representing different cultural traditions. This diversity enriches the musical language and content of the works, reflecting transcultural processes. Additionally, the use of texts by Ukrainian poets, who also differ in cultural backgrounds, adds an extra layer of meaning and emotional nuances.

As reflected in the project, contemporary art trends confirm that transculturality is essential to globalized cultural practice. This is confirmed by the opinion of N. Otreshko, according to which “transcultural exchange and mutual enrichment, the processes taking place before our eyes, testify to the fact that the cultural, symbolic sphere is the first to be globalized and entails transformations in politics and the economy” (Otreshko, 2021, p. 128). In this context, art is used as a means to reinterpret historical events, defend human rights, and express national identity in a global context. The collective authorship of the project underscores the importance of collaboration and interaction between artists from different cultures, demonstrating that contemporary art is increasingly moving from individualism to collective forms of creativity, fostering more profound cultural exchange and the development of transcultural connections. This project, initiated by Karmella Tsepkolenko, is not only an expression of the individual experiences of each participant but also a collective artistic manifesto reflecting the shared experience of the Ukrainian people. Thus, war causes destruction and stimulates cultural exchange and interaction between nations. Despite forced migration, Ukrainian artists preserve and spread their cultural identity abroad.

Therefore, the project serves as a vivid example of how art can express national identity, an instrument of cultural resistance, and a platform for intercultural exchange. It demonstrates how, under the challenging conditions of war, art can unite people, preserve and disseminate cultural values, and fulfill the role of cultural diplomacy on the international artistic stage.

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Biodata of Authors



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Tsyypin). She visited composers' master-courses in Germany (Darmstadt, 1992, 1994; Bayreuth, 1993). She has been awarded diplomas and prizes at Soviet All-Union and international composers' competitions. She got creative residences, grants and scholarships from the *Heinrich Böll Foundation* (Germany, 1995), *DAAD* (Germany, 1996), *Brahms-Haus Foundation* (Germany, 1996), the *ArtsLink* scholarship from the *International Renaissance Foundation* (Ukraine) and *National Endowment for the Arts of the USA* (New York, USA, 1996), and resident grants from the *Künstlerhof Schreyahn* (Germany, 1998), *Worpswede Künstlerhäuser* (Germany, 2000), *Die Höge* (Germany, 2002, 2003). The *International Renaissance Foundation* (Ukraine), *KulturKontakt* Association (Austria) and *Pro Helvetia* (Switzerland) granted her creative and cultural projects. She is author of more than 100 music works, most of which have been produced on 12 CDs, and recorded by radios in many countries. She is the conception author, founder and Artistic Director of the annual International Festival of Modern Art *Two Days and Two Nights of New Music*. She is the initiator, a founder and the Head of the Board of the International Public Organization *Association New Music*—the Ukrainian Section of *International Society of Contemporary Music/ISCM*. She is Professor of composition at Odesa National A. V. Nezhdanova Music Academy, Secretary of the Board of the National Ukrainian Composers' Union (since 2005). She was awarded: Laureate of the Taras Shevchenko National Prize of Ukraine (2024), Laureate of the the B. Ljatoshyns'kyj Prize (2001), chevalier of the Chapter Journal

“Ji” (2012), Laureate of “Honorary Distinctions” of a Head of the Odesa Regional State Administration (2014) and titled the Honoured Arts Worker of Ukraine (2006). Knight of the Order of the Chapter of the Journal “Yi” (2012), Laureate of the “Honorary Award” of the Head of the Odesa Regional State Administration (2014), Presidential Scholarship for Cultural Figures 2018–2020, 2021–2023. Municipal Award “Cultural Capital” of the Odesa City Council (2019), Diploma from the First President of Ukraine L. Kravchuk (July, 2019) and the Order “Guardian of Ukraine” (2019).

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