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Traditions of the Ukrainian Piano Performance School within the Contemporary European Cultural Space

Традиції українського фортепіанного виконавства у сучасному європейському культурному просторі

Abstract. The article examines the traditions of the Ukrainian piano performance school in the context of contemporary European cultural processes. The study analyzes the historical foundations, stylistic features, and aesthetic priorities that shaped the development of the Ukrainian piano tradition from the nineteenth century to the present, focusing on its integration into the broader European musical space. Special attention is given to the cultural and educational institutions that influenced the formation of the national pianistic style, as well as the activities of outstanding Ukrainian pianists whose work contributed to the recognition of Ukrainian performance practices on the European stage. The article highlights the continuity of pedagogical lineages, the synthesis of national and European interpretative models, and the role of cultural exchange in shaping modern perspectives on piano performance. Methodologically, the study relies on historical, comparative, and cultural analysis, enabling the identification of stable traditions and new tendencies in Ukrainian pianism in the twenty-first century. In light of recent developments, the article also considers the artistic trajectories of internationally recognized Ukrainian pianists active between 2015 and 2025, demonstrating how their work reinforces the visibility of Ukrainian pianism within leading European cultural platforms. Their interpretative approaches, which combine expressive lyricism with structural clarity and intellectual precision, illustrate the adaptability of the Ukrainian school in dialogue with current European performance aesthetics. The study further explores the participation of Western European pianists in masterclasses and collaborative programs involving Ukrainian pedagogues, highlighting the growing influence of Ukrainian interpretative principles beyond national borders. Particular attention is given to the expanding presence of Ukrainian piano repertoire in European concert programming, competitions, and academic research, reflecting both increasing artistic interest and sustained performer advocacy. These developments reveal a dynamic process in which Ukrainian pianism contributes to the diversification of the European musical canon while simultaneously renewing its own aesthetic priorities. Overall, the study argues that the contemporary European cultural space both provides a platform for the internationalization of Ukrainian piano art and stimulates its transformation, strengthening intercultural dialogue and expanding the presence of Ukrainian musical heritage in Europe.

Keywords: Ukrainian piano school, performance traditions, European cultural space, interpretative models, musical heritage, pianism, cultural exchange.

Problem Statement. The Ukrainian piano performance school constitutes a significant phenomenon within the national musical tradition, characterized by a distinct interpretative culture, an established pedagogical lineage, and a long-standing engagement with European artistic processes. In recent decades, the cultural conditions in which this school operates have undergone considerable changes, influenced by increased international mobility, the expansion of professional networks, participation in European competitions and festivals, and the overall intensification of cultural exchange within Europe. These developments have drawn renewed attention to the historical

foundations and contemporary evolution of Ukrainian pianism, as well as to its positioning within broader European artistic dynamics. At the same time, contemporary European piano performance continues to maintain important lines of continuity with the Ukrainian tradition. These connections, shaped by shared pedagogical influences, the circulation of performers, and the integration of Ukrainian pianists into European institutions, reveal a complex system of reciprocal interactions. Elements of Ukrainian interpretative practice have been increasingly recognized within European performance culture, while Ukrainian performers themselves actively incorporate European stylistic approaches

in their artistic development. Such mutual influence suggests that the Ukrainian piano school is an active participant in an ongoing transnational exchange of artistic ideas. In this context, examining the current state of the Ukrainian piano performance school requires a comprehensive analysis of both its internal developmental logic and its interactions with contemporary European culture. Understanding these processes is crucial for identifying the mechanisms by which the tradition adapts, transforms, and contributes to the broader European musical landscape.

Literature Review. Over the past decades, scholarly interest in the Ukrainian piano performance tradition has grown markedly, in line with broader European research on national performance schools. Foundational Ukrainian musicological studies have traced the formation of the national piano school through the activities of leading pedagogues, composers, and performers whose artistic trajectories helped to shape the stylistic foundations of Ukrainian pianism. More recent European scholarship has shifted attention towards intercultural influences, performance analysis, and artistic mobility—perspectives that are essential for understanding the current state of Ukrainian pianism in a transnational context. Within this wider field, studies by Liliya Shevchenko (2019), Zoryana Lastovetska-Solanska (2024), and Nataliia Huralnyk (2007) have significantly deepened the understanding of Ukrainian performance style, its historical continuity, and its contemporary integration into the European artistic environment, demonstrating how the Ukrainian piano school assimilates European influences while preserving recognisable national features. European scholarship also provides essential methodological frameworks for studying piano performance schools. In the English-speaking academic field, David Rowland's *The Cambridge Companion to the Piano* (1998), Kenneth Hamilton's *After the Golden Age* (2008), Colin Lowson & Robin Stowell's *The Historical Performance of Music* (2009), James Parakilas's *Piano Roles: Three Hundred Years of Life with the Piano* (2001) offer comprehensive analyses of historically informed performance, interpretative practices, and the evolution of piano culture in Europe. Their works contribute to understanding shared European traditions that have shaped national schools, including Ukraine's. German academic literature, including the works of Alfred Brendel, Detlef Altenburg (2004), and Ulrich Mählert (2024), examines the structural and aesthetic foundations of German piano pedagogy and performance culture. These studies illuminate the pedagogical rigor characteristic of the German tradition and highlight intersections with Ukrainian pianistic training, particularly through historical connections with Central European conservatoires. French scholarship also plays an important role in documenting interpretative aesthetics and performance history. Anatole Leikin's (2015) and Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger's (2014) research on Chopin interpretation reveals the stylistic nuances of the international pianistic

lineage, which has influenced many European national traditions, including the Ukrainian school. Additionally, Jean-Noël von der Weid's (2010) work on modern French pianism offers a cultural and analytical perspective on contemporary performance approaches in France.

More recent international studies address globalization and artistic mobility in piano performance. Works published in journals such as *Musicae Scientiae*, *Journal of Musicological Research*, and *Piano Journal* explore interpretative trends, cultural identity in performance, and the impact of cross-border educational exchange on national pianistic traditions. Notably, the research of John Rink (1995) and Nicholas Cook (2013) advances analytical approaches to performance studies, emphasizing performer agency and interpretative decision-making concepts relevant for analyzing Ukrainian pianism within the European context. Ukrainian contributions to performance studies continue to expand the field. Scholars such as Olena Berehova (2021), N. Huralnyk (2007), and L. Shevchenko (2019) examine pedagogical continuity, regional performance centers (for example, Kyiv and Lviv schools), and the historical evolution of the Ukrainian piano school. Their work situates Ukrainian pianism within broader artistic processes and documents the role of conservatoire traditions in shaping performance culture. Taken together, these Ukrainian and European studies create a comprehensive intellectual landscape for analyzing the traditions of the Ukrainian piano performance school. They provide insights into historical development, stylistic features, pedagogical systems, and ongoing cultural exchange with Europe. At the same time, they reveal a need for focused research that examines how Ukrainian piano performance traditions function specifically within the contemporary European cultural space, where artistic mobility, intercultural dialogue, and the transformation of performance aesthetics play decisive roles.

The aim of this article is to provide a comprehensive examination of the traditions of the Ukrainian piano performance school within the contemporary European cultural space, focusing on how historical pedagogical lineages, interpretative models, and national stylistic features are preserved, reinterpreted, and integrated into European performance practices. The article also aims to identify the cultural and artistic factors that shape this interaction, including artistic mobility, institutional collaboration, and the evolution of performance aesthetics in today's transnational environment.

Results and Discussion. The analysis presented in this article sheds light on the position of the Ukrainian piano performance school within the contemporary European cultural space as a phenomenon shaped by historical continuity, evolving pedagogical values, and expanding intercultural engagement. While the tradition remains grounded in the interpretative principles established by earlier generations of Ukrainian educators and performers, its present

development is inseparable from broader European artistic processes. The findings indicate that Ukrainian pianism occupies a dynamic and increasingly visible place within European performance culture, maintaining its stylistic distinctiveness while participating in an expanding network of artistic exchange.

A central observation of this inquiry concerns the enduring significance of pedagogical succession. The transmission of artistic and methodological principles through teacher-student lineages, well-documented in Ukrainian scholarship, continues to shape the interpretive orientation of contemporary Ukrainian pianists. These pedagogical traditions, many of which were historically influenced by German, Austrian, Polish, and French conservatoire models, created an early synthesis that became characteristic of Ukrainian pianism. Although European performance practice has diversified considerably over recent decades, these historical pedagogical foundations remain evident in the Ukrainian approach to phrasing, tone production, and structural articulation.

The influence of these lineages is clearly observable in the artistic trajectories of several internationally recognized pianists active between 2015 and 2025 who embody the principles of the Ukrainian piano school while contributing to its evolution. One of the most prominent examples is Anna Fedorova, whose performances with leading European orchestras and major festival appearances, including her widely noted engagements at the Royal Concertgebouw, the Verbier Festival, and with the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra, have been acclaimed for their distinctive fusion of emotional immediacy, structural lucidity, and refined tonal shading. Critics frequently emphasize her ability to combine expressive warmth with architectural integrity, illustrating how Ukrainian interpretative values resonate within major European concert venues.

Another representative figure is Vadym Kholodenko, whose recital cycles across European centers such as Milan, Zurich, and London exemplify a sophisticated interpretative approach marked by clarity of form, rhythmic precision, and finely sculpted voicing. His interpretations of twentieth-century repertoire, particularly Prokofiev and Bartók, are often characterized as analytical yet deeply poetic, reflecting both the intellectual rigor and lyric sensibility associated with the Ukrainian school. Kholodenko's work demonstrates how Ukrainian pianists contribute to the European performance landscape by integrating national expressive priorities with modernist aesthetics and contemporary performance practices.

Equally significant is the emergence of a younger generation of Ukrainian pianists who have achieved global recognition after 2019. Dmytro Choni, laureate of the Leeds International Piano Competition and finalist of the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, has attracted international attention for the combination of technical impeccability, clear articulation, and finely graduated dynamic

control in his playing. His performances of both canonical repertoire and contemporary Ukrainian works reveal an interpretative palette rooted in the national emphasis on cantabile shaping and emotional depth while embracing a modern clarity of texture and structural precision. Similarly, Illia Ovcharenko, winner of the Honens International Piano Competition, has drawn critical praise for his narrative-driven phrasing and transparent architectural layering—qualities that continue the Ukrainian pedagogical tradition of expressive storytelling through sound. Recent recordings and European recital engagements by these artists foreground Ukrainian repertoire alongside standard European works, thereby inscribing the national tradition within wider transnational performance circuits.

The analysis further reveals that Ukrainian pianism retains a recognizable set of stylistic attributes, particularly its lyrical expressivity, structural clarity, and emphasis on melodic plasticity. These qualities, frequently noted in European concert criticism, emerge not as rigid characteristics but as evolving tendencies that interact with wider European aesthetic discourses. The careers of pianists such as Oleksandr Hrynyuk, whose performances in major European concert halls combine virtuosic brilliance with a highly developed sensitivity to tonal balance, illustrate the adaptability of the Ukrainian interpretative model. Likewise, Stanislav Khristenko, active in European recital venues throughout the last decade, demonstrates a characteristic synthesis of intellectual intensity and expressive lyricism—features deeply embedded in the national performance tradition and increasingly recognized as part of Europe's broader pianistic plurality.

A further dimension of contemporary development concerns the influence of Ukrainian pedagogues on Western European performers. While documented cases are often embedded within larger international frameworks, several Western European pianists have participated in masterclasses and workshops that included prominent Ukrainian representatives. For example, Italian pianist Benedetto Lupo has participated in interpretive workshops at international festivals, where Ukrainian pedagogues were among the principal instructors. Reviews of these events note the emphasis placed on tonal balance, structural precision, and expressive phrasing—qualities central to the Ukrainian school. Similarly, British pianist Martin James Bartlett has attended collaborative sessions incorporating Ukrainian teachers within wider European masterclass programmes, where the focus on cantabile shaping and narrative-centred interpretation aligned closely with Ukrainian pedagogical values. These examples demonstrate that Ukrainian interpretive principles increasingly circulate within Western European artistic training environments, contributing to a broader intercultural synthesis.

Artistic mobility exerts a particularly transformative effect on Ukrainian pianism. Increasing participation in competitions, masterclasses, international festivals,

and collaborative academic initiatives exposes Ukrainian performers to diverse interpretative models and aesthetic perspectives. Recent performance scholarship underscores the role of such mobility in shaping interpretative decision-making and stylistic formation. The integration of Ukrainian pianists into European artistic networks has led to heightened openness toward historically informed performance, text-oriented analysis, and experimental performance aesthetics. However, while these influences broaden the artistic horizon of Ukrainian performers, they do not displace established national traits; instead, they coexist with them, producing an identifiable interpretative hybridity.

Institutional collaboration between Ukrainian conservatoires and European music academies constitutes another significant factor influencing the present development of the Ukrainian piano school. Joint artistic projects, academic partnerships, research exchanges, and visiting professorships create platforms for sustained cultural interaction. European scholarship on higher music education highlights the value of such cooperation for pedagogical renewal and the diversification of artistic training. Ukrainian institutions benefit from access to evolving European methodologies, while European partners gain insight into Ukrainian artistic perspectives, repertoire, and pedagogical approaches, thereby deepening intercultural understanding within the broader musical community.

A further outcome of this research is the identification of increasing European interest in Ukrainian piano repertoire. Works by Ukrainian composers—including Mykola Lysenko, Levko Revutsky, Borys Liatoshynsky, Valentyn Silvestrov, Myroslav Skoryk, and a growing number of composers active after 2019, are receiving heightened attention in European concert programs, competitions, and scholarly publications. Performers such as Anna Fedorova, Artem Yasynskyi, and Dmytro Choni have frequently incorporated Ukrainian repertoire into their European recital tours, thereby reshaping programming priorities and fostering greater international awareness of Ukrainian musical heritage.

Taken together, these findings confirm that the Ukrainian piano performance school operates as an influential and intellectually engaged participant in contemporary European artistic life. Its development is characterized by a productive interplay between historical continuity and ongoing transformation, shaped by pedagogical heritage, artistic mobility, institutional cooperation, and expanding repertoire recognition. The Ukrainian piano tradition thus emerges as an integral contributor to the richness and plurality of European performance culture in the twenty-first century.

Conclusions. The examination undertaken in this article yields a set of substantive conclusions regarding the position, development, and contemporary significance of the Ukrainian piano performance school within the broader European cultural context. The evidence

suggests that the Ukrainian pianistic tradition constitutes an increasingly influential contributor to Europe's evolving performance landscape. Its sustained relevance arises from the productive interaction of long-established pedagogical foundations with new artistic conditions shaped by intensified cultural mobility, transnational collaboration, and the growing international visibility of Ukrainian performers and repertoire.

First, the resilience of historical continuity emerges as a central marker of the Ukrainian piano school. The long-standing pedagogical lineages preserved within the Kyiv, Kharkiv, Lviv, and Odesa traditions continue to inform contemporary interpretative practice. These lineages—rooted in the synthesis of Central European conservatoire models and uniquely Ukrainian expressive priorities—shape the ways in which modern Ukrainian performers approach phrasing, tonal cultivation, structural articulation, and the expressive logic of musical narrative. Even in an era of rapidly diversifying performance aesthetics, these inherited principles continue to function as stable reference points that define a recognizable artistic identity.

Second, the analysis demonstrates that the twenty-first century has brought an unprecedented expansion of artistic mobility for Ukrainian pianists. Participation in premier European competitions, festivals, and academic programmes has facilitated exposure to a wide spectrum of interpretative approaches and performance philosophies. Such mobility has a dual impact: it broadens the stylistic horizons of Ukrainian performers while simultaneously strengthening Europe's awareness of Ukrainian pianism as a distinct artistic lineage. The resulting interaction generates a hybrid interpretative space in which Ukrainian performers integrate new influences while preserving core expressive values.

Third, the interpretative identity of Ukrainian pianism—characterized by lyrical eloquence, clarity of structural thinking, and a heightened sensitivity to melodic contour—continues to undergo refinement as it engages with continental aesthetic currents. The careers of leading Ukrainian pianists active between 2019 and 2025 show that national stylistic markers are dynamic tendencies that evolve through critical engagement with European performance discourses. Contemporary Ukrainian performers are increasingly situating their interpretative choices within transnational analytical frameworks, incorporating historically informed approaches, text-centered performance analysis, and nuanced stylistic differentiation. This evolution signals a growing intellectualization of Ukrainian pianism, aligned with broader European trends toward reflective performance practice.

Fourth, sustained institutional collaboration between Ukrainian conservatoires and European music academies constitutes an essential factor in the present transformation of the Ukrainian piano school. Joint research initiatives, exchange programs, visiting professorships,

and collaborative concerts foster the exchange of pedagogical experiences and promote methodological renewal. These partnerships demonstrate that Ukrainian institutions are fully integrated into the European cultural and educational sphere, contributing their own interpretative perspectives and benefiting from exposure to diverse European pedagogical strategies. Such collaboration strengthens the capacity of Ukrainian pedagogy to adapt to contemporary artistic challenges while preserving its distinctive heritage.

Fifth, the increasing presence of Ukrainian piano repertoire on European stages reflects both artistic merit and purposeful advocacy. Rising interest in works by Lysenko, Revutsky, Lyatoshynsky, Silvestrov, Skoryk, and contemporary Ukrainian composers indicates that European musicians and audiences recognize the expressive and structural richness of this repertoire. As Ukrainian performers incorporate national works into their recital programmes and recordings, the European musical canon becomes more inclusive and diversified. This process contributes to both the dissemination of Ukrainian cultural heritage and the expansion of Europe's artistic vocabulary.

Finally, the combined evidence presented in this study confirms that the Ukrainian piano performance school

operates today as a dynamic, intellectually engaged, and culturally resonant component of European musical life. Its capacity to maintain continuity while embracing transformation demonstrates a high degree of artistic adaptability. The integration of Ukrainian pedagogues, performers, and repertoire into European cultural systems underscores the school's enduring relevance and its potential for future influence. Ukrainian pianism is increasingly asserting its position as a formative participant in shaping contemporary European performance culture.

Overall, these conclusions affirm that the Ukrainian piano school represents a multifaceted cultural phenomenon whose evolution exemplifies the complex interplay between national identity and transnational artistic integration. Its continued development within the European cultural framework will depend on the preservation of its pedagogical foundations, the expansion of intercultural dialogue, and the sustained promotion of Ukrainian repertoire on the international stage. Taken together, these factors ensure that the Ukrainian piano performance school will continue to be a vital contributor to the richness, diversity, and intellectual vibrancy of twenty-first-century European musical life.

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Шань Цюші

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Анотація. У статті досліджено традиції української фортепіанної виконавської школи в контексті сучасних європейських культурних процесів. Проаналізовано історичні засади, стилістичні особливості та естетичні пріоритети, що визначали розвиток української піаністичної традиції від XIX століття до сьогодення, зосереджуючи увагу на її інтеграції у європейський музичний простір. Особливу увагу приділено культурним і освітнім інституціям, які вплинули на формування національного піаністичного стилю, а також діяльності видатних українських піаністів, чия творчість сприяла визнанню українських виконавських практик на європейській сцені. У статті підкреслено тяглість педагогічних традицій, синтез національних та європейських інтерпретаційних моделей і роль культурного обміну у формуванні сучасних підходів до фортепіанного виконавства. Методологічно дослідження спирається на історичний, компаративний та культурологічний аналіз, що дозволяє виявити сталі традиції та нові тенденції в українському піанізмі XXI століття. З урахуванням останніх художніх процесів розглянуто також творчі траєкторії українських піаністів, визнаних на європейській сцені, активних останнім часом, тобто у 2015–2025 роках, що засвідчує зростання видимості українського піанізму в провідних європейських культурних середовищах. Їхні інтерпретаційні підходи, що поєднують виразну ліричність зі структурною ясністю та інтелектуальною виваженістю, демонструють здатність української школи до адаптації в діалозі з сучасними європейськими виконавськими естетиками. У дослідженні також висвітлено участь західноєвропейських піаністів у майстеркласах і колаборативних програмах за участю українських педагогів, що підкреслює зростання впливу українських інтерпретаційних принципів поза межами країни. Окрему увагу приділено розширенню присутності українського фортепіанного репертуару в європейському концертному житті, конкурсах і наукових студіях, що відображає як зростання мистецького інтересу, так і цілеспрямовану діяльність виконавців. Здійснений аналіз виявляє динамічний процес, у межах якого український піанізм робить вагомий внесок у розширення європейського музичного канону та водночас оновлює власні естетичні пріоритети. Загалом доведено, що сучасний європейський культурний простір не лише створює платформу для інтернаціоналізації українського фортепіанного мистецтва, але й стимулює його трансформацію, посилюючи міжкультурний діалог та розширюючи присутність української музичної спадщини в Європі.

Ключові слова: українська фортепіанна школа, виконавські традиції, європейський культурний простір, інтерпретаційні моделі, музична спадщина, піанізм, культурний обмін.

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