



**Yuriy O.Karyagin**

Kiev, Ukraine

## Ukrainian Concert Culture as needs Undeveloped developing

### Abstract

Music is an important part of our emotional and spiritual life. And certainly, no technical device can communicate the emotions one receives when sitting in the music hall and enjoying live performance by the favorite artist. This is especially true in the era of music consumption, when even CD quality - forget about vinyl - is forgotten in favor of MP3 format, which is more comfortable in use but is known for faults of compression. Certainly, live performances give feelings incomparable with listening to such recordings. But Ukraine lacks the culture of attending and organizing live shows, and this is a problem to deal with if we want the new generations to understand what musical beauty is about. Music enriches personality, and Ukrainians now are effectively deprived of it.

**Key words:** music, concert, Ukraine.

Music is an important part of our emotional and spiritual life. And certainly, no technical device can communicate the emotions one receives when sitting in the music hall and enjoying live performance by the favorite artist. This is especially true in the era of music consumption, when even CD quality - forget about vinyl - is forgotten in favor of MP3 format, which is more comfortable in use but is known for faults of compression. Certainly, live performances give feelings incomparable with listening to such recordings. But Ukraine lacks the culture of attending and organizing live shows, and this is a problem to deal with if we want the new generations to understand what musical beauty is about. Music enriches personality, and Ukrainians now are effectively deprived of it.

The new laws on mass performances make the situation even worse. Natalia Korolevska, the head of Industrial, Regulatory and Commercial Politics Committee of Verkhovna Rada, notes that after proposed amendments to the law 'On Tour Events in Ukraine' are adopted, ticket prices will increase by 25-50%, because organizers will have to prepay the events before being allowed to hold them. This, in turn, increases financial risks (Liga). As of now, the main concert-going public

seemingly consists of students and intellectuals, and if the prices rise, they will not be able to visit live shows as often as now. This will also result in organizers being less likely to hold events which could be risky in terms of income; as a result, the number of good shows will drop.

In general, people from the post-Soviet countries tend to think of themselves as of educated and culturally rich, especially in comparison with the 'spiritless West'. However, in reality, it is the other way round, and the examples concerning concert culture are illustrative to prove this. In this paper, the author will prove that the Ukrainian culture of organizing and attending concerts lacks many features that are characteristic to the states where such culture is already developed, taking Western Europe as an example. It is important to note that this essay mostly deals with non-classical music, as, by default, it is more popular and thus affects more people. The goal of this research is to find out the critical problems and determine what can be changed for the better in the Ukrainian concert culture.

The first problem - and an obvious one - is the quantity of the concert halls in Ukraine. Even in Kyiv, the performances are usually held in five or six venues. There is also a number of clubs, but most of them are either not suited for live music, or too small, or have very old equipment, which can easily spoil the performance. This causes the problematic situation when organizers have trouble finding the place for the artist to perform if the 'good' clubs are already reserved for the specific date - and sometimes artists have to play in absolutely inadequate conditions just because there are no alternate variants. This is the situation in the capital city with more than three million inhabitants; in other cities, the situation is even worse, and sometimes there are only two or three more or less venues (including clubs) suitable for performance.

However, one might note that there are much less young Ukrainian bands than in Western countries, and the stars going to worldwide tours do not usually perform in Ukraine; thus the demand for concert halls is limited. This is true; but the crucial point is that the existing halls cannot satisfy the demand for *quality*. Most of Ukrainian clubs and music halls were not built with purpose of live performances, and thus there are severe problems with the sound (Trashman). As an experienced visitor of concerts, the author totally agrees with this point: such problems in the halls like MVC are obvious, and the artist's sound operator has to try very hard to overcome the acoustic drawbacks immanent to these halls.

Sergey Kalugin, a Russian guitarist and singer, has written an Internet-spread essay *Koncertny Zvuk: instrukciia-pamiakta posetiteliu zok-koncerta*, where he explains the peculiar problems of post-Soviet music halls and their sets of apparatus. He starts with explaining some specific principles of the electric sound and basic elements of scene equipment, which allow musicians to hear each other while performing. Then, Kalugin continues to tell his readers about sound sources which should be heard by the audience. After this introduction, the author writes about the real situation with apparatus in music halls and clubs in the post-Soviet countries. First of all - musicians have to play without hearing the sound which is heard by the audience — the needed speakers (*iprostrely*) are not installed in our venues. They

only hear themselves and their colleagues, which is similar to blind flying in aviation. Secondly, on modern concerts, the most active listeners usually come to the 'fan zone' near the scene. But the speakers for the whole venue are on the sides of the scene, and thus do not cover this zone. In foreign halls, it is normal to install special speakers for the 'fan zone'; for our concerts, Kalugin proposes a bitter choice - either to listen in the centre of the hall, or to have fun under the scene. Thirdly, a music hall, which was actually built for performances, is by itself a musical instrument, similar to the recording studio. When musicians play, the sound resonates from the walls, floor and ceiling, and makes them vibrate. If the hall is planned for music, the resonances are calculated and pre-defined - in this way, the building process is similar to tuning a musical instrument. If it is not, the walls should at least consume sound - otherwise parasite resonances will make a concert in such a hall unbearable. However, this is precisely the case of halls like Mijnarodny Vystavkovy Centr (MVC). Finally, the speakers directed at the public are either cheap and produced by no-name companies, or too weak for music (this is true to halls which were built for speeches), or are in bad conditions due to overuse.

Certainly, these arguments may be countered by saying that the quality of venues is sufficient, and the ideal performances in halls which lack the aforementioned attributes, such as the concert of A-HA in MVC, prove this. But, judging from the author's personal experience both as a visitor and as an organizer, Kalugin's testimony is actually applicable to the Ukrainian venues. The only flawless music hall in Kiev seems to be Palats Ukraina; all others certainly suffer from some or all the problems described by Kalugin. This makes concerts less comfortable than possible for both performers and listeners. And certainly, if one attends a concert with failed live sound, there is a possibility that he or she will not visit concerts anymore, thinking that it is normal for live shows in general.

Of course, even in the worst hall, the sound *can* be satisfactory, if the high-quality equipment is installed and good sound producers work with it, as in the case of A-HA. However, most bands can not allow themselves to bring the entire set of equipment with them. Organizers have to loan the apparatus themselves from the third party, which is expensive and connected with financial risks. Problems with transportation (which usually requires a truck) and installation (organizers have to conduct it themselves) are included. And still, all these efforts can be ruined by artist's or venue's sound producers if they are not competent enough.

At the same time, as Vladimir Trashman notes, Ukrainian organizers tend not to fulfill the artists' requirements - both in technical and in mundane spheres. For example, foreign artists include five-star hotels in their riders, because they know that otherwise they risk being settled in a three-star one. It is not uncommon for our organizers to cheat artists or to treat the event as a possibility to earn money, without thinking about the quality of the show (Trashman). This signals the lack of organizational culture and ethics. Having the experience of organizing musical events, and being acquainted with other groups of promoters, the author understands that this does not concern *all* organizers. But generally, as artists state,

in Ukraine, sometimes whether a concert is to be held is decided a week before the show time, and the culture or promoter-performer relations is low (Yarmola).

So far, we have covered the problem of Ukrainian concert organization. Another aspect of concert culture is attendance. The visitors in our country tend to come much later than the show actually has to start. While discussing organizational matters with my colleague from *Lejf Eriksson* creative group, I mentioned that 15 minutes after the declared time is a reasonable moment to start the show. Her reaction was, 'Come on. Do *you* really come to the concert the time it has to start?' My response that I usually come 20 or 30 minutes earlier seemed to be shocking. And, in fact, masses of people do come later. Surely, one may say that some of them might have got into a traffic jam, or had personal problems of any sort, and that is, certainly, a reasonable excuse. But actually, it is common for attendees to drink wine in the bar or beer in the corridor — depending on the concert status - after the declared show time. This, in turn, causes organizational problems: the performer surely will not come on the scene if half of the audience is still to come. And sometimes concerts are delayed by half an hour, or even more, just by this reason. Except for showing disrespect to the performer, people who come to the show late steal songs from themselves - artists often have to leave the town the night after the show, and thus, if the concert starts later, the setlist may be cut. Irrational Slavic propensity towards breaking the rules seems to be the only possible explanation for this kind of behavior.

Finally, there is a problem of popular demand. The statistics demonstrate that the highest minimal prices in Kyiv this season are set on the show of Stas Mikhaylov, a Russian chanson performer with unpretentious music. At the same time, good artists sometimes have to switch the *на, I, \$ freca^se- tftey* fail to gather major venues (Trashman). In addition, Ukrainians do not follow modern music tendencies: for example, in rock music, the most popular performers are those from the old times, such as Deep Purple, and modern rock stars are hardly known, and thus not invited to Ukraine.

According to the arguments stated above, it is logical to come up with the conclusion that the Ukrainian concert culture is still, due to reasons not covered by this essay, not developed enough in comparison with the Western world. During this study, some specific problems have been found which have to be dealt with in order for our concert culture to increase. First of all, the number and quality of existing venues, where live music can be performed, are definitely not enough. Second, there are problems with equipment in our music halls and clubs, which cause discomfort for both artists and visitors. They are to be solved by both sound producers and local organizers; however, some Ukrainian organizers do not care about the resulting sound, as their goal is only to earn money, and they may even cheat the artists. Finally, the audience has no culture of attending concerts, not managing even to come in time, and does not seemingly demand good music. This is possibly the most important notion, as without demand there will be no supply of the good sound. All of these problems can be actually solved by common efforts of the state, businessmen, and public itself. The state should take down the amendments to the law

‘On Tour Events in Ukraine’ and, in fact, simplify the bureaucracy concerning the concert organization, which will make the tickets cheaper than now. Businessmen should think of investing funds in building of new, modern concert halls with European-level equipment and sound. Petty businessmen can also buy good equipment sets and loan them out to the performers; the competition between such enterprises may be encouraged by the state to prevent local monopolies. But all these initiatives should be demanded by the public. If people *en masse* understand that Stas Mikhaylov and similar music is primitive, and stop visiting such shows but go to the classical music or rock concerts, the market laws will inevitably cause new quality venues to be built and favoring laws to be signed. In turn, the state has to take measures to inform people what good music is through informative, organizational, and financial support of such music. If these measures are implemented, the music culture and taste of our society will generally rise, which will contribute to the people’s personal development in future.

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