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## Philosophical understanding of screen reality: Meaningful measurements and interpretations

**Abstract.** The aim of the study was to determine the structural and semantic parameters of screen reality and their influence on the formation of the cinematic image. The methodology was based on a combination of structural-semiotic analysis, compositional analysis of the frame, comparative study of spatial, temporal and visual-stylistic solutions, as well as contextual analysis of the artistic and technical components of films. Eleven films were selected for the study, reflecting different stages in the development of cinema and demonstrating different approaches to the organisation of screen reality: "The Seventh Seal", "Citizen Kane", "Run Lola Run", "Blade Runner 2049", "In the Mood for Love", "Earth", "Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors", "A Spring for the Thirsty", "Babylon XX", "Dune", and "The Power of the Dog". It was established that screen reality functioned as a conditionally autonomous reality, created with the help of a system of artistic and technical solutions that transformed the reproduction of the objective world into a conceptually structured model. The spatial dimension was revealed through the coordinated decisions of the director and cinematographer, where the organisation of the frame, the arrangement of objects and characters, as well as the proportional relationship between shots served as semantic markers. The temporal dimension was formed by editing techniques, the rhythm and duration of the frame, as well as dramaturgical models, including non-linear narratives that influenced the perception of events and the construction of plot dynamics. The visual-stylistic and emotional-psychological dimensions were determined by the interaction of colour, light and texture with spatial and temporal parameters, creating an atmosphere as a carrier of conceptual content. It was found that the combination of these dimensions ensured the integrity of the artistic environment, in which visual and sound elements were in orderly interrelationships. Such integrated use of spatial, temporal, and stylistic resources made it possible to create a cinematic image capable not only of reproducing, but also interpreting reality. The practical significance of the study lay in the possibility of using its conclusions to develop methods for analysing film works in film studies, as well as in training programmes for specialists in the field of directing, cinematography and film art design

**Keywords:** autonomous reality; editing techniques; perception of events; plot dynamics; spatial parameters

### Introduction

The relevance of the study was determined by the growing role of screen culture in shaping contemporary worldview models and artistic practices. Screen reality had become not only a carrier of information, but also an autonomous space for meaning-making, combining artistic, philosophical and communicative dimensions. Its comprehension required an interdisciplinary approach, since the content structure of visual space encompassed

the categories of space, time, stylistics and emotional atmosphere, which interacted to create a unique cinematic experience. The need for analysis arose due to the insufficient integration of philosophical concepts into film studies discourse, which limited the understanding of how professional roles in cinema – director, cinematographer, editor, screenwriter, and production designer – formed a coherent picture of screen reality. The problem

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of the study was the lack of a systematic description of the meaningful dimensions of screen reality from the perspective of various participants in the filmmaking process, which would simultaneously take into account both theoretical developments and examples from film practice. Studies offered separate aspects of philosophical, cultural or semiotic analysis, but did not generalise them into a single conceptual model capable of explaining the synthesis of spatial, temporal, visual-stylistic and psychological components.

Within the framework of studying the philosophical potential of screen reality, R. Sinnerbrink (2022) considered cinema as a self-sufficient way of thinking. It had been proven that through visual images, cinema was capable of forming complex ontological models and building epistemological connections that would otherwise remain abstract. This approach provided the basis for interpreting film as an instrument of philosophical argumentation. P. Prokopic (2024) addressed the problem of narrative multilayeredness in fictional cinematic spaces. The author's results showed that the combination of different levels of spatial and plot organisation created an immersive effect, in which the viewer interacted with the on-screen reality as a multidimensional system. This broadened the understanding of the boundaries of artistic reality and the mechanisms of its perception.

Using material from Ukrainian cinema, I. Bakhov *et al.* (2022) traced the influence of sociocultural circumstances on the visual language of films. It was found that the transformation of artistic space was accompanied by a shift from collective ideological plots to individualised ones, where the cultural marking of images became particularly important in the formation of national identity. In the study by M. Barnych *et al.* (2021), the semantic status of staged reality in cinema became central. The authors established that such reality was not a reproduction of the actual world, but a structured system of meanings, in which the director and the production team set the framework for interpretation by the viewer. This opened up new opportunities for understanding the connection between concept and cultural context. L. Nauanova (2023) analysed the work of Ukrainian avant-garde directors of the 1920s, noting the combination of innovative techniques with ideological explorations. It was shown that experiments with form and frame structure served as a way to convey deep philosophical reflections that reflected the social changes and cultural transformations of the era. V. Bakirov & D. Petrenko (2023) explored trends in the development of contemporary Ukrainian visual culture in a global context. It was found that the combination of local identity with universal visual codes created a new quality of screen reality that combined national meanings and international communicative clarity.

In the work of O. Bezruchko *et al.* (2024), attention was focused on scenography as a content-creating element. It was determined that the compositional design

of space was capable not only of setting the visual style, but also of acting as a carrier of philosophical subtext, influencing the emotional perception and interpretation of images. N. Kravchenko & L. Shanaieva-Tsymbal (2023) emphasised semiotic and archetypal mechanisms in contemporary Ukrainian cinema. Researchers showed that the use of an archetypal narrative structure shaped the recognition of cultural meanings and provided a multi-level reading of the screen text, strengthening the connection between the work and the viewer. Visuality in M. Lister (2023) was considered a culturally conditioned construct that required interpretation in a social and ideological context. The analysis focused on how cultural codes influenced the perception of images. The author concluded that understanding visual representations was only possible by taking these codes into account. The evolution of cinematic language in E. Horyslavets (2021) was traced in connection with cultural transformations in society. The study focused on changes in the visual and narrative strategies of cinema. The conclusion was that cinema not only reflected cultural processes, but also became a factor in their development. An analysis of the studies showed that the existing works were mostly limited to considering individual components of screen reality: visual culture, semiotics or scenography, without integrating spatial, temporal and psychological dimensions into a single concept. There was also no systematic analysis of the interaction of different professional roles in the formation of the philosophical space of the screen, and comparisons of international and Ukrainian film practices in this context remained fragmentary.

The aim of the study was to create a holistic conceptual model of the philosophical understanding of screen reality that would integrate spatial, temporal, visual-stylistic and emotional-psychological dimensions, taking into account the experience of Ukrainian and world cinema. In accordance with the stated aim, the objectives of the study included: to reveal the philosophical foundations of screen reality and their influence on the formation of the cinematic image; to characterise the spatial dimension in cinema from the perspective of the director and cinematographer; to analyse the temporal dimension in the work of the editor and screenwriter; to identify the characteristics of the visual-stylistic and emotional-psychological dimensions as a synthesis of the components of cinematic language.

## Materials and Methods

The study was conducted using a combination of philosophical-aesthetic, structural-semiotic and comparative methods of analysis, which made it possible to comprehensively examine screen reality in its spatial, temporal, visual-stylistic and emotional-psychological dimensions. At the first stage, a corpus of cinematographic works was identified, which differed in genre, cultural and historical diversity. The selection included films that demonstrated

different conceptual approaches to the formation of screen reality. The film "The Seventh Seal" (1957) by director I. Bergman was chosen for its philosophical richness, symbolic composition, and deep interaction of spatial and temporal categories, which allowed for the revelation of methods of transforming existential themes into visual images. "Citizen Kane" (1941) by director O. Welles was included because of its innovative use of spatial depth of field, specific compositional solutions, and complex editing structure, which demonstrated the multifaceted nature of the construction of cinematic space. The film "Run Lola Run" (1998) by director T. Tykwer was selected for the analysis of temporal models, in particular non-linear and cyclical structures, as well as specific rhythmic editing that forms the dramatic tempo. "Blade Runner 2049" (2017) by director D. Villeneuve was included in the selection due to its complex visual and stylistic organisation, where colour, light and texture function as carriers of subtext and means of creating an emotional and psychological environment. "Dune" (2021) by director D. Villeneuve was included as an example of spatial organisation through large-scale panoramas and a minimalist colour palette, which built an image of "desert metaphysics" and emphasised the philosophical symbolism of the environment. "In the Mood for Love" (2000) by director W. Kar-wai was included in the corpus as an example of visual and stylistic organisation, in which colour solutions, light and shadow effects, and the rhythmic structure of the frame function as means of forming an intimate emotional space. The Ukrainian film "Earth" (1930) by director O. Dovzhenko was selected for study as an example of the combination of epic visual composition with philosophical reflection on social processes, realised through the organisation of spatial and symbolic structures of the frame. The film "Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors" (1964) by director S. Paradzhanov was included in the corpus due to its synthesis of ethnocultural motifs with innovative cinematographic solutions that form a unique visual dynamic and multi-layered space. "A Spring for the Thirsty" (1965) by director Y. Illienko was included due to its special rhythmic organisation and dramatic timing, which structures the plot through a combination of realistic and poetic elements. "The Power of the Dog" (2021) by director J. Campion was chosen as an example of contemporary work with space, where the landscape functions as a carrier of psychological subtext, and natural light and long shots created an atmosphere of inner tension. "Babylon XX" (1979) by director I. Mykolaichuk was chosen for its complex stylistic organisation, which combined colour symbolism, light and shadow solutions, and textural imagery to create a multidimensional emotional space.

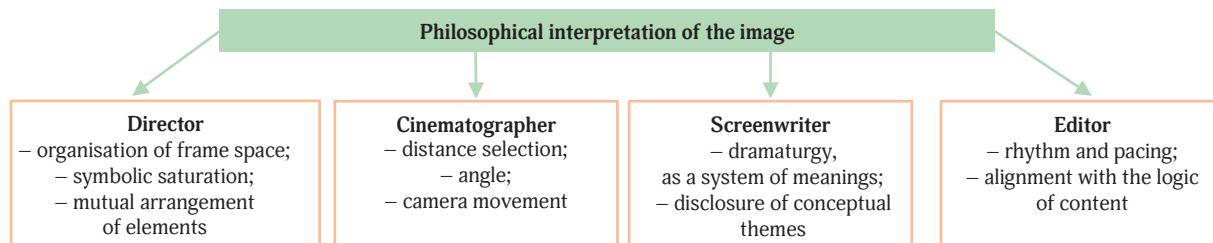
The analysis was carried out in several stages. First, a detailed structural breakdown of each work was carried out, highlighting spatial, temporal and visual-stylistic elements. Next, a comparative method was used to

compare the ways, in which screen reality was formed in different cultural and historical contexts. Philosophical and aesthetic analysis was used to determine the categorical coordinates of screen reality and identify the author's strategies in working with space and time. The structural-semiotic approach made it possible to consider compositional and stylistic decisions as a system of signs integrated into the overall concept of the film. The research methodology also involved examining the interaction between different levels of cinematic language, from the spatial organisation of the frame to the integration of emotional and psychological effects into the overall artistic structure. This ensured a comprehensive study of the object and made it possible to trace, how technical and aesthetic solutions interact in creating the conceptual integrity of screen reality.

## Results

### Philosophical foundations of the formation of screen reality in cinematography

Screen reality was defined as a space created by cinematic means that possessed its own structural and semantic organisation and was perceived as a conditionally autonomous reality, distinct from the direct reproduction of the physical world. Its specific nature lain in the transformation of objective phenomena and events through a system of artistic solutions, which integrated figurative language, compositional principles, rhythmic-editing structure, and the author's overall concept. This reality does not merely model space and time; it established a specific logic of interaction between elements, which ensured the work's internal integrity and recognisable aesthetic. The philosophical status of screen reality lies in its capacity to set the categorical coordinates of perception – spatial, temporal, and cause-and-effect – while simultaneously offering the viewer interpretative models related to existential, ontological, and axiological questions. On a conceptual level, it emerged as a constructed model of the world, where visual and sound components existed within an ordered system of interrelationships that mutually reinforced and elaborated upon one another. Screen reality was not limited to the mere fixation of the depicted; rather, it formed its own semantic structure, capable of influencing the interpretation of meanings, emotional engagement, and the viewer's worldview, thus making it an autonomous object of philosophical analysis. The distribution of professional functions among the main participants in the filmmaking process, within the context of the philosophical conceptualisation of the screen image, determined how the creative decisions of each specialist influenced the construction of the film's spatial, temporal, and semantic structure. The coherence and harmony of these decisions ensured the formation of a cohesive model of screen reality, in which the artistic form was subservient to the conceptual objectives of the work (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** Functions of key participants in shaping the philosophical content of screen reality

Source: based on M. Norfolk (2020), R. Spottiswoode (2022)

The interaction of the functions shown in the figure ensured the unity of the artistic concept and its philosophical content. The synthesis of the actions of the director, cinematographer, screenwriter and editor formed the screen space, which was perceived by the viewer as a logically and conceptually complete reality. Such integration of creative roles allowed for a high level of consistency between the visual form, dramatic structure, and semantic accents of a cinematic work. An example of the realisation of screen reality as a philosophical model was the film “The Seventh Seal” (1957) by director I. Bergman. The space in it was organised as a closed structure, where compositional decisions such as the use of symmetry, contrasting shots and a static camera created a sense of metaphysical concentration (Fig. 2).



**Figure 2.** A moment from the chess game between Knight and Death

Source: The Seventh Seal (1957)

Visual images, in particular the scene of a chess game with Death, form an autonomous space of meanings, in which the plot served only as one of the levels of perception. Time in the film was perceived not as linear, but as condensed, devoid of everyday details, allowing the viewer to focus on the existential aspects of the characters' dialogue. In this case, the reality on screen took on the characteristics of a symbolic system, where each frame was a logical element of the whole, subordinate to a single philosophical concept. Another example, O. Dovzhenko's “Earth” (1930), demonstrated a different approach to the formation of screen reality, focused on the organic connection between man and the natural

environment. The space of the frame was constructed through panoramic shots that captured the cyclical nature of natural processes and place human activity in a broader context of existence (Fig. 3).



**Figure 3.** Frame from the film “Earth” (1930), directed by O. Dovzhenko

Source: Earth (1930)

The philosophical basis of the image in the film “Earth” was based on the idea of harmony and interdependence, and the montage structure emphasised the repetitiveness and rhythm of phenomena. The absence of excessive dialogue reinforced the significance of the visual series as the carrier of the main meaning, where each frame was both documentary evidence and artistic abstraction. Both examples showed that screen reality in the philosophical dimension was not a mechanical fixation of reality. It was constructed as a model, in which spatial and temporal parameters were integrated into a semantic structure. In “The Seventh Seal”, this structure focused on expressing metaphysical uncertainty and the search for meaning, while in “Earth” it reflected the patterns of the natural and social cycle. In both cases, cinematic means were used to organise the viewer's experience in accordance with certain philosophical coordinates, where each visual and audio element functioned as a semantic marker.

The concept of screen reality in this interpretation allowed to cover both the technical and content aspects of film production. From a technical point of view, it determined the way images were constructed and edited to create the illusion of an independent world. In terms of content, it was a mechanism for constructing meanings, in which artistic decisions reflected the author's vision

and at the same time enter into dialogue with cultural codes that were understandable to the viewer. The philosophical foundations of screen reality lay in the fact that each element of this space was part of a conceptually coherent system, where the relationship between spatial, temporal and visual factors determined the overall perception of the work. This understanding was key to the further analysis of other dimensions of cinema, as it defined the boundaries, within which the director, cinematographer, screenwriter and editor work, and determined the interdependence of their decisions. Screen reality does not exist outside these professional interactions: the director formed the conceptual framework, the cinematographer gave it visual form, the screenwriter determined the logic of the unfolding events, the editor organised the temporal structure, and the art design integrated everything into a single space. The result was an artistic product, in which the philosophical foundations of the image were manifested not only in the choice of theme, but also in the structure, composition, and rhythm of the work (Shtets & Melnyk, 2024).

Applying this approach to the analysis of "The Seventh Seal" and "Earth" revealed that, despite significant differences in historical context, artistic styles, and technical capabilities, both films demonstrated consistent work with screen reality as a philosophical object. In the first case, the frame space and editing are organised to create metaphysical tension, in the second – to capture and emphasise the natural rhythm of life. As a result, both films functioned as holistic systems, where each element had a conceptually justified place. This vision of screen reality opened up the possibility of a systematic consideration of cinema in the coordinates of philosophical analysis, where space and time cease to be merely physical categories and became carriers of meaning. This allowed to reveal the underlying patterns of cinematic image construction and determine, how artistic decisions at different levels affected the integrity and perception of a cinematographic work. Screen reality was the result of the coordinated work of all participants in the creative process, where the director's conceptual decisions, the cinematographer's visual means, the screenwriter's dramaturgical structure, the editing organisation of time and the artistic design were integrated into a single

system. In such a structure, space and time go beyond purely physical categories and take on the role of carriers of meaning, and each element of the composition performs a specific function in the formation of the holistic semantic field of the work. The harmony of these components ensured the completeness and conceptual consistency of the cinematic product, in which the philosophical foundations of the image were manifested at all levels of its organisation.

### Spatial parameters as a meaningful resource in cinematography

The spatial dimension in cinematography defined the visual and compositional boundaries of screen reality, within which the plot unfolds, the dramaturgy was constructed, and the semantic structure of the work was formed. It encompassed the organisation of objects in the frame, the arrangement of characters and the nature of their interaction with the physical or conditional environment, as well as the perspective, scale, and dynamic parameters that determined the direction and rhythm of the audience's perception. The director's decisions set the overall concept of space, determining its degree of openness, fragmentation or integrity, while the cinematographer's work shaped the visual perspective through the choice of angle, depth of field, camera movement and light and shadow accents. The coordinated interaction of these components transformed space into an active instrument of conceptualisation, where every element acted not only as an aesthetic component, but also as a semantic marker, integrated into a holistic artistic concept that ensures the internal unity and conceptual completeness of the film. The coordinated work of the director and cinematographer in constructing the frame space forms not only the visual composition, but also the semantic level of the film's perception. Each professional role executed its own set of functions that influenced the organisation of the screen space and determined, how the viewer interpreted events, the interrelationships between characters, and the environment. Table 1 systematised the key tasks and functions of these specialists, as well as explaining their contribution to the creation of the semantic structure of the cinematographic work.

**Table 1.** The roles of the director and cinematographer in shaping the frame space and their impact on the semantic structure of the film

Role	Functions	Description of impact on the semantic structure of the film
Director	Organisation of the boundaries of the depicted space, arrangement of objects and characters, proportional relationship of frames, creation of symbolic load through visual markers, definition of compositional dominants, formation of the logic of event perception, choice of space type (closed/open, fragmented/integral) according to the film's concept	Determined, how the viewer interpreted events, ensured the coherence of the spatial organisation with the film's concept, influenced emotional perception, and provided additional layers of meaning through symbolism

Table 1, Continued

Role	Functions	Description of impact on the semantic structure of the film
Cinematographer	Choice of distance to the object (close-up, medium frames, long frame), definition of the angle of view (vertical, horizontal, overhead frame), creation of the relationship between objects (dominance, subordination, equality), camera movement as an orientation marker in space, unveiling new elements of the environment, emphasising the dynamics of action, and forming the visual perspective	Shaped the method of visual perception of space, set the rhythm and dynamics of the visual sequence, underscored the relationship between characters and the environment, and influenced the intensity of emotional perception and the conceptual interpretation of the image

Source: based on C. Benson-Allott (2022), Y. Aslanyürek & E. Aycan (2024)

An analysis of the roles of the director and cinematographer showed that their decisions had a direct impact on the conceptual unity of the reality depicted on screen. The frame space, organised according to the principles of compositional harmony and visual perspective, became a carrier of meaning, in which the technical parameters of filming interacted with artistic tasks. Such integration allowed the creation of holistic, conceptually motivated screen images, in which visual form and content were inseparably united. In the film "Citizen Kane" (1941), the frame space had a multi-layered organisation, which was realised through the use of depth composition. The placement of objects on different planes allowed for the simultaneous perception of several levels of the event, allowing the viewer to follow the interaction between the characters and the environment. Cinematographer G. Toland used wide-angle optics in combination with a large depth of field, which preserved the clarity of the image in both the foreground and background (Fig. 4).



Figure 4. Party scene from the film "Citizen Kane"

Source: Citizen Kane (1941)

This allowed for the creation of frames, where symbolic elements of space – such as architectural details, furniture, or lighting – served as contextual accents, deepening the meaning of the scene. The vertical and diagonal lines of the composition created a sense of scale and hierarchy, which enhanced the dramatic effect. In the film "Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors" (1964), the

frame space was formed as an ethnographically rich environment, where each element of the decor served as a carrier of cultural code. The director's concept involved not only capturing everyday details, but also incorporating them into the compositional structure as semantic markers associated with local tradition. Cinematographer Y. Illienko used a wide range of camera angles and movements, including circular panoramas and long tracking shots, which revealed space as a dynamic, multi-layered system. Camera movement often served as a way of visually connecting the characters with their environment, emphasising the interdependence of humans and the natural landscape (Fig. 5).



Figure 5. Frame from the film "Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors"

Source: Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors (1964)

As a result, the screen space acquired symbolic significance, becoming not just a backdrop for the action, but an equal participant in the dramatic process. A comparison of the approaches in these two films demonstrated different strategies for using space as a construct of meaning. In "Citizen Kane", it was organised according to the principle of perspective depth, which allowed several plot centres to be placed within a single frame and the viewer's attention to be directed through compositional dominants. In "Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors", space was constructed as a densely saturated environment, where every detail was included in a cultural-symbolic system, and the cameraman's movement served as

a means of its unfolding. In both cases, the director's and cinematographer's decisions regarding the organisation of space determined not only the visual form of the work, but also the level of its perception in terms of content.

The coordination of the director's and cinematographer's work in shaping the frame space transformed the visual plane into an instrument of conceptualisation. The symbolic and compositional load of the elements, complemented by the choice of distance, angle and camera movement, created an integrated space, in which the image performed both a descriptive and a meaning-creating function. This approach allowed the construction of screen reality as a holistic system, where space not only contained the event, but also shaped the conditions for its interpretation. The generalisation of the spatial dimension in cinema showed that its structure was formed as a result of the interaction of directorial and cinematographic decisions, which ensured a combination of compositional orderliness and conceptual meaning. The space of the frame acted not only as the environment, in which the event unfolds, but also as an independent carrier of meaning, capable of influencing the interpretation of the work. The choice of image scale, object configuration, and camera movement trajectory determined, how the viewer perceived the relationships between characters, environment, and plot action. This approach ensured the integrity of screen reality, where spatial parameters were an active component of the overall artistic concept.

### Time parameters as a structural component of cinematography

In editing practice, the temporal organisation of a work was determined by the rhythm, duration of individual frames, and the order, in which they were connected. Rhythm was formed by the ratio of fast and slow editing transitions, changes in the pace of events, and variations in the dynamics of the visual sequence. The duration of a frame determined the degree of the viewer's focus on the image: short frames increased the pace and created a sense of dynamics, while long frames allowed the viewer to immerse themselves in the details and visual atmosphere. The order of editing transitions affected the perception of cause-and-effect relationships and determined the logic of the unfolding of events. By manipulating these parameters, the editor not only organised the chronology, but also formed an artistic temporal structure that may coincide with real time or deliberately deviate from it to create a certain effect. For the screenwriter, the temporal dimension was expressed in the construction of dramatic time – a structured sequence of events that determined, how the plot's emphasis was distributed. Dramatic time can be linear, when events unfold sequentially, or non-linear, when the plot was built on flashbacks, parallel lines or time shifts. Non-linear models allowed to combine different time planes, created the effect of repetition or variability of events, and changed

the perception of the duration and sequence of action. Such techniques were often used to enhance emotional impact, intensify conflict, or convey a character's subjective experience. The film "Run Lola Run" (1998) was an example, where the editing organisation of time and the script concept work in close connection (Fig. 6).



Figure 6. Frame from the film "Run Lola Run"

Source: Run Lola Run (1998)

The film was based on the repetition of one plot situation with three different versions of events. The editing was based on a fast pace, quick transitions, and a combination of short frames with dynamic camera movements. This created a sense of a continuous race against time, which was constantly under pressure from circumstances. The script structure, built on the principle of variable repetition, used non-linear dramatic time, where each version of the story began at the same starting point, but ended differently. This structure allowed to explore the impact of small changes in the course of events on the final outcome, emphasising the relativity and instability of cause-and-effect relationships. Another approach to temporal organisation was demonstrated in the film "A Spring for the Thirsty" (1965). Here, the editing structure was based on the use of long frames and a minimal number of editing transitions, which slowed down the pace of the narrative and created a sense of time stretching (Fig. 7).



Figure 7. Frame from the film "A Spring for the Thirsty"

Source: A Spring for the Thirsty (1965)

This approach allowed to focus on states and detailed that would go unnoticed in a fast-paced montage. The order of the frames was organised in such a way that the real passage of time seems to stop, and the visual images became independent carriers of meaning. The script combined linear narration with episodic inserts of a symbolic and metaphorical nature, blurring the line between the present and the past. In such a structure, dramatic time loses its strict chronological certainty and acquires conventional features, which reinforced the philosophical subtext of the film. A comparison of these two examples showed, how editing and screenplay decisions regarding time can produce diametrically opposite effects. In "Run Lola Run", the temporal dimension was subordinated to high dynamics and constant movement, which created tension and keeps the viewer's attention active. In "A Spring for the Thirsty", the temporal rhythm was slowed down, and the editing aimed at creating an atmosphere of concentrated contemplation, where time is perceived as an extended, almost static quantity. Both approaches demonstrated that the organisation of time was a key means of managing the emotional and semantic perception of a film. "The Power of the Dog" (2021) stood out for its use of space as a key tool for psychological expression (Fig. 8).



**Figure 8.** Frame from the film "The Power of the Dog"

Source: The Power of the Dog (2021)

The landscapes in film "The Power of the Dog" were not a neutral backdrop, but convey hidden meanings that heighten the dramatic tension. The mountain ranges of Montana were presented in the form of large-scale panoramas that contrasted with the intimate interiors, creating a sense of isolation for the characters in a hostile yet majestic environment. Long frames and the absence of a fast-editing rhythm allowed the viewer to immerse themselves in the inner state of the characters, feeling their vulnerability and psychological tension. Natural lighting emphasised the texture of the environment – from dry grass to wooden surfaces of the ranch – and at the same time creates a special "natural rhythm" of the image. Every ray of sunlight or glare in the evening twilight became a significant element of the composition, acquiring symbolic subtext. As a result, the visual

solution transformed nature into an active participant in the drama: the landscape became a mirror of the characters' psychological states, and the atmosphere of the film was an example of how the aesthetics of slow cinema can create a multi-layered system of images. In general, it was important in editing and screenwriting that the time dimension was not a passive fixation of duration, but an active tool for constructing meaning. The tempo, the order of the frames, the construction of the plot lines and their mutual arrangement created conditions for the interpretation of events, shape the viewer's expectations and determine the depth of their involvement in the story. When the editor and screenwriter work in harmony, the dimension of time became an integral part of the artistic concept, rather than just a technical element. This ensured the integrity of the work, in which time – both real and dramatic – became a carrier of meaning and one of the leading factors of artistic expression.

#### **Visual-stylistic and emotional-psychological parameters of cinematography**

In the work of a production designer, colour, light and texture were tools that directly influenced the creation of a work's subtext. The colour palette determined the emotional tone of a scene and can indicate hidden meanings: warm shades were associated with intimacy or calm, while cool shades were associated with alienation or tension. Light, through its intensity, direction and contrast, directed the viewer's attention and shaped the spatial depth of the frame. The texture of objects and surfaces emphasised the materiality of the environment, which influenced the perception of space as real or conditional. The combination of these elements provided visual coding of information that the viewer read on a subconscious level, deepening their interaction with the reality on screen. An important task for the director was to integrate spatial, temporal and stylistic dimensions in order to create a coherent atmosphere. Spatial solutions determined the location of objects and the interaction of characters with the environment, temporal solutions set the pace and rhythm of the unfolding of events, and stylistic solutions created the overall visual identity of the work. The synthesis of these components ensured the consistency of the emotional and psychological impact, with each visual element supporting the given mood and concept. As a result, the atmosphere of the film became an integral part of the semantic structure, rather than just a decorative addition. In "Blade Runner 2049" (2017), the colour palette was based on the contrast between saturated neon shades and dark areas of the frame. The combination of blue, green, and red accents with dense shadows created a visual code associated with urban overload and the technological dominance of the environment. Lighting solutions, in particular the use of side and back lighting, created an effect of limited visibility, which enhanced the feeling of uncertainty (Fig. 9).



**Figure 9.** Frame from the film “Blade Runner 2049”

Source: Blade Runner 2049 (2017)

The texture of the sets and costumes, rich in detail, conveyed the material complexity of the world, emphasising its multi-layered nature. As a result, the visual and stylistic level interacted with the emotional and psychological, creating an atmosphere of alienation and inner tension. The film “Dune” (2021) demonstrated another approach to working with colour and light in space. Here, the visual concept focused on a minimalist palette of sandy shades that emphasised the monotony and scale of the desert environment (Fig. 10).



**Figure 10.** Frame from the film “Dune”

Source: Dune (2021)

The contrast between light and shadow was used to create a metaphysical dimension to the frame, where space appears not only as a physical landscape, but also as a philosophical category. Large-scale panoramic shots are combined with ascetic costume and set designs, creating a sense of ritualistic austerity and emphasising the alienation of humans in a hostile environment. In “In the Mood for Love” (2000), colour was used as a tool to nuance the emotional state of the characters. The predominance of rich reds, warm browns and golden tones set an intimate yet tense atmosphere. Lighting techniques using soft diffused light and zoned shadows created an intimate space. The textures of the fabrics of the costumes, walls, and interior objects created a sense of tactile intimacy, reinforcing the psychological aspect of the interaction between the characters. The combination of these techniques with a slow pace and repetitive angles results in a high degree of emotional immersion for the viewer. In the film “Babylon XX” (1979), the colour scheme was based on a natural palette, where earthy tones were

combined with bright elements of traditional clothing. This ensured the reflection of an authentic environment and at the same time marked the symbolic elements of culture. Light was used to emphasise the texture of the natural landscape and the expressions on the characters’ faces, creating a balance between realistic reproduction and artistic emphasis on details. The texture of everyday objects, architecture and natural objects enhanced the authenticity of the image, while maintaining compositional harmony. This approach promoted the integration of the visual and psychological levels, where the viewer perceived the event as part of a holistic cultural environment. What these examples had in common was that visual and stylistic decisions determined the framework for the emotional perception of the plot. In “Blade Runner 2049”, it was created a sense of isolation in a technological space; in “In the Mood for Love”, it was enhanced the intimacy and tension in the characters’ relationships; and in “Babylon XX”, it was formed a connection with the cultural and natural environment. Regardless of the context, colour, light, and texture were not only aesthetic devices, but also structural elements that influenced the interpretation of content.

The synthesis of the work of the production designer and director in this dimension ensured that the spatial, temporal, and stylistic components supported each other. The atmosphere created as a result of such integration becomes the semantic core of the work, aimed at forming a holistic emotional and psychological experience for the viewer. As a result, the visual and stylistic level became not an isolated artistic layer, but an integral part of the conceptual construction of screen reality, where each element was subordinate to the overall idea and a specific artistic strategy. The visual-stylistic and emotional-psychological parameters of cinematography were formed as a complex of interrelated elements, in which colour, light and texture performed the function of meaning-creating factors capable of directly influencing the interpretation of what was depicted. The colour palette determined the emotional tone of the scene, the lighting solution forms the volume and depth of space, and the texture of objects enhanced the feeling of materiality of screen reality. The coordination of these components with spatial and temporal parameters ensured the structural integrity of the work, where the atmosphere was not only an aesthetic characteristic, but also a carrier of conceptual content. As a result, the visual-stylistic system became an instrument for regulating the emotional impact on the viewer and accurately shaping the author’s meaning.

## Discussion

The analysis of the results obtained was carried out in comparison with the provisions presented in contemporary scientific research on the philosophical, spatio-temporal, visual-stylistic and emotional-psychological parameters of cinema. The comparison made it possible to

determine the extent to which the patterns identified in this study correlated with existing scientific approaches, as well as to outline the differences that deepen the understanding of the components of cinematic language and their interaction. In particular, a comparison of the results obtained with the provisions outlined in the work of S. Swarnakar (2025) made it possible to establish that the interpretation of screen reality through the prism of a semiotic approach confirmed the role of sign systems in the formation of the semantic levels of the cinematic image. Consistency with the principle of holistic structural organisation of visual and sound elements identified in this study was evident, but it was clarified that within the analysed films, semiotic mechanisms acquired not only a narrative, but also a compositional and spatial function, which was not directly emphasised in S. Swarnakar's (2025) conclusions. The correlations between the spatial dimension and production processes established in the study coincide with the results of A. Zienowicz-Wielebska *et al.* (2020), which emphasised the importance of interaction between film project participants in achieving artistic integrity. However, this study detailed the influence of director-cinematographer interaction on the organisation of screen space in terms of semantic content, which complements the authors' theoretical model with empirical examples.

T. Lankhuizen's (2025) conclusions about the relationship between visual form and the viewer's empathic engagement resonated with the synthesis of stylistic and emotional parameters identified in this study. However, while T. Lankhuizen (2025) focused primarily on the psychological mechanisms of empathy, in this case, the emphasis was on the combination of colour, light, and texture with the rhythm of editing as factors that determined the emotional and psychological effect. The study by L. Liapi *et al.* (2024) confirmed that the editing structure affected the subjective perception of time. This was consistent with the changes in dramatic rhythm identified in this study through variations in frame duration. However, in this case, it was noted that rhythmic shifts in films were used not only to modify the perception of time, but also to emphasise the semantic nodes of the narrative. The results of K. Kovarski *et al.* (2022) regarding the influence of editing on the perception of time correlate with the mechanisms of nonlinear structuring of the narrative identified here. At the same time, it was clarified that in the selected films, editing performed not only a perceptual-modulating function, but also a conceptual-interpretative function aimed at forming the author's point of view.

The patterns of spatio-temporal organisation and stylistic integrity established in this study were correlated with a number of contemporary approaches that revealed various aspects of cinematic language. An examination of the technological editing tools in the work of J.H. Liew *et al.* (2023) demonstrated the potential of the latest algorithms for maintaining spatial-temporal

consistency, which made it possible to compare them with the effects identified in this study, achieved by traditional editing methods. This comparison confirmed that even without the use of high-tech solutions, it was possible to ensure the stability of the narrative structure if the editing was organised taking into account the dramatic rhythm. P. Russo's (2023) idea of a screenplay model as a complex adaptive system turned out to be related to observations about the interaction between screenplay construction and editing: in the films studied, the flexibility of the dramaturgy ensured its correspondence to the pace and structure of the visual series. Such integration was also evident in the camera work analysed by D. Mia (2023), which emphasised its role in shaping the atmosphere. In the results of this study, this position was supplemented by an emphasis on the interdependence of cinematographic techniques and artistic and staging decisions that reinforced the conceptual subtext of the scene.

Similar consistency was demonstrated by the findings of M.B. Yilmaz *et al.* (2023), who analysed the impact of camera movement on the emotional engagement of viewers. The effect revealed in this study confirmed this relationship, but was expanded in the context of combining spatial dynamics with colour and light parameters, creating a multi-level psychological impact. The influence of the creative team's coordinated work on the final stylistic unity, described by A. Watson *et al.* (2018), also coincided with the results obtained. At the same time, it was clarified that such unity was evident not only at the filming stage, but also in the intra-frame organisation of space. This observation was consistent with the approach of R. Bénard O'Kelly *et al.* (2024), where atmosphere was defined as a structural component of a film, and within the scope of this study, as the result of the integration of spatial, temporal, and visual-stylistic decisions. E. Frantz's (2023) study, which focused on the emotional background of contemporary cinema, provided the basis for correlation with the identified mechanisms of emotional and psychological influence. The analysed films demonstrated that the emotional effect was formed through a complex combination of colour, light, rhythm and spatial organisation, which emphasised the inseparable connection between the emotional component and the technical and artistic parameters of cinematic language. The interpretation of cinematic space, as recorded in the results of this study, demonstrated the stability of classical approaches to spatial organisation even in the context of the active introduction of digital technologies. A comparison with the conclusions of K. Ilmaranta (2020) confirmed that traditional methods of creating a coherent visual concept remain effective even in an environment where virtual production practices are widespread. This coincidence emphasised the relevance of classical techniques as a basis for the formation of a semantically and conceptually coherent space.

The tendency towards ambiguity in spatial and temporal solutions revealed in the films studied directly

echoed A.S. Grønstad's (2020) approach to the poetics of opacity in visual culture. While in scientist's interpretation opacity was a way of complicating the viewer's visual experience, in the analysed materials it also served as a dramaturgical tool, creating an effect of uncertainty and supporting a multifaceted perception. This allowed for a broader understanding of the poetics of opacity, combining it with editing and compositional strategies. The combination of the philosophical categories of space and time with the screen image established in this study received an additional interpretation in light of the considerations of K. Redrobe & J. Scheible (2020) on spatial thinking in cinema and digital cultures. Their approach emphasised the theoretical understanding of the interaction between space, time and technology, while in the results obtained in this study, space-time structures acquired a clear narrative function related to the logic of plot development. This showed that the philosophical foundations of spatial thinking not only determined visual organisation, but were also integrated into the dynamics of the script.

The data obtained in the study on the cultural-ontological dimension of cinematic reality corresponded to K.L. Killebrew's (2020) approach to the representation of cultural identity in visual practices. In his concept, identity was formed through visual codes, symbols, and spatial configurations, while in the analysed films, it emerged as a result of combining these visual factors with the temporal rhythm and emotional tone of the scene. Thus, the cultural dimension was not limited to elements of visual decor, but manifested itself in the entire system of cinematic construction – from *mise-en-scène* to editing rhythm. The systematisation of the compared results showed that the concepts developed in contemporary research were closely related to the characteristics of screen reality, spatial-temporal organisation and visual-stylistic structure of the film identified in this study. The identified similarities confirmed the stability of the key patterns of cinematic image formation, while the differences revealed the potential for further refinement of theoretical propositions regarding the role of philosophical foundations, editing decisions, and stylistic parameters in creating the atmosphere and semantic integrity of a work. The set of conclusions outlined the prospects for expanding the scientific discourse in the direction of interdisciplinary understanding of cinematic language, combining aesthetic, cognitive, and communicative approaches.

## Conclusions

The study found that screen reality in cinema functions as an artificially constructed space, organised according to its own structural and semantic laws. It differed from the direct reproduction of objective reality due to the transformation of events and phenomena through a system of artistic decisions that combined figurative language, compositional principles, and the author's concept. The spatial dimension of cinema was clearly ev-

ident in "The Seventh Seal" and "Citizen Kane", where the frame was constructed as a multi-layered structure with philosophical undertones. In the film, space was used to visualise the existential problems of man and the inevitability of death, and to demonstrate the social multidimensionality and internal conflicts of the characters. In the Ukrainian films "Earth" and "Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors", spatial solutions reflected a close connection with the natural and cultural environment: in "Earth", the earth appeared as a symbol of life and collective memory, while in "Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors", space acquired ethnographic richness, becoming a carrier of local cultural tradition. In "Babylon XX", space was interpreted symbolically and allegorically, allowing realistic scenes to be combined with metaphorical images. The temporal organisation demonstrated different models. In "Run Lola Run", it was based on high dynamics and repetition of plot variations, which created a tense rhythm and emphasised the role of chance in the course of events. In contrast, in "A Spring for the Thirsty" and "The Power of the Dog", time slowed down due to long frames and a contemplative atmosphere, creating an effect of philosophical concentration and psychological depth. The visual and stylistic level was most evident in "Blade Runner 2049" and "Dune", where the combination of colour, light and texture formed an urban-philosophical and metaphysical visual code. "In the Mood for Love" was dominated by intimate colours, intimacy and rhythm, which created a psychologically deep space that conveyed the subtle nuances of the characters' emotional states.

The results confirmed that screen reality functioned as a multidimensional system. Space, time, colour, light and texture acted as meaning-making factors in it, and their synthesis ensured the integrity of the artistic image and forms the philosophical dimension of the cinematographic work. The generalisation of the results allowed to conclude that the interaction of spatial, temporal, visual-stylistic and emotional-psychological parameters ensured the multi-level organisation of screen reality, in which artistic decisions functioned as a single meaning-creating system. The study had limitations related to the focus of the analysis on individual representative examples, which resulted in partial coverage of the potential spectrum of visual and narrative strategies in world cinema. Promising areas for further research include expanding the comparative analysis to a broader array of cinematographic works from different cultural traditions, using interdisciplinary methods.

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## Філософське осмислення екранної дійсності: змістовні виміри та інтерпретації

**Анотація.** Метою дослідження було визначити структурно-смислові параметри екранної дійсності та їхній вплив на формування кінематографічного образу. Методологія ґрунтувалася на поєднанні структурно-семіотичного аналізу, композиційного аналізу кадру, порівняльного вивчення просторових, часових і візуально-стилістичних рішень, а також контекстуального аналізу художніх і технічних компонентів фільмів. Для дослідження було відібрано одинадцять фільмів, що відображали різні етапи розвитку кіномистецтва та демонстрували відмінні підходи до організації екранної дійсності: «The Seventh Seal», «Citizen Kane», «Run Lola Run», «Blade Runner 2049», «In the Mood for Love», «Земля», «Тіні забутих предків», «Криница для спраглих», «Вавилон XX», «Dune», «The Power of the Dog». Було встановлено, що екранна дійсність функціонувала як умовно автономна реальність, створена за допомогою системи художніх і технічних рішень, що трансформували відтворення об'єктивного світу у концептуально структуровану модель. Просторовий вимір виявлявся через узгоджені рішення режисера та оператора, де організація кадру, розташування об'єктів і персонажів, а також пропорційне співвідношення планів виконували функцію смислових маркерів. Часовий вимір формувався монтажними прийомами, ритмом і тривалістю кадру, а також драматургічними моделями, включаючи нелінійні наративи, що впливали на сприйняття подій і побудову сюжетної динаміки. Візуально-стилістичний та емоційно-психологічний виміри визначалися взаємодією кольору, світла і фактури з просторовими та часовими параметрами, створюючи атмосферу як носій концептуального змісту. Було виявлено, що поєднання зазначених вимірів забезпечувало цілісність художнього середовища, у якому візуальні та звукові елементи перебували у впорядкованих взаємозв'язках. Таке інтегроване використання просторових, часових і стилістичних ресурсів дозволяло створювати кінематографічний образ, здатний не лише відтворювати, але й інтерпретувати реальність. Практичне значення дослідження полягало у використання його висновків для розробки методик аналізу кінотворів у кінознавстві, а також у навчальних програмах підготовки фахівців у галузі режисури, операторської майстерності та художнього оформлення фільму

**Ключові слова:** автономна реальність; монтажні прийоми; сприйняття подій; сюжетна динаміка; просторові параметри

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## Alternative rock in Ukraine in the context of DIY practices and subcultural dynamics of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century

**Abstract.** The relevance of this research was defined by the lack of comprehensive interdisciplinary studies addressing the aesthetic qualities, subcultural and countercultural dynamics, importance of Do-It-Yourself ethics in the development of autonomous musical infrastructure. The aim of the study was to explore the formation, evolution, and sociocultural functions of Ukrainian alternative rock in the intertemporal period of the 1980s and 1990s. The findings demonstrated that the Ukrainian alternative rock scene functioned as a form of cultural self-organisation operating independently of both state ideology and the emerging commercial music industry. It reflected an aesthetic of resistance, genre hybridity, interdisciplinary collaboration (notably with literature and theatre), and a pursuit of cultural sovereignty. Do-It-Yourself ethics served not only as a practical survival strategy, but also as a means of social identification and political expression. Although mainstream cultural industries offered limited support, the Ukrainian alternative scene of the 1990s fostered an emancipated cultural space that can be interpreted as a manifestation of cultural sovereignty. The study identified local rock clubs, festivals, and independent media as key platforms that facilitated the dissemination of alternative musical practices. It also highlighted the persistence of the underground dimension of Ukrainian alternative rock, which, unlike Western counterparts, was never fully absorbed into mainstream culture. This made the Ukrainian case a distinct example of prolonged cultural autonomy in the post-Soviet space. The article proposed viewing late 20<sup>th</sup>-century Ukrainian alternative rock as an informal cultural institution that combined protest-driven and creative potential in the context of post-totalitarian transformation. The practical value of the study lies in establishing approaches for analysing the Ukrainian musical underground as a form of countercultural expression and subcultural autonomy

**Keywords:** Ukrainian rock; subcultural identity; Do-It-Yourself technology; underground music; cultural resistance

### Introduction

Alternative rock in Ukraine emerged during the transitional period of the 1980s-1990s as both a musical form and a sociocultural phenomenon, shaped by aesthetics of resistance and elements of DIY (Do-It-Yourself) ethics. Despite its significance in processes of artistic autonomy and sociocultural transformation, this field remained insufficiently explored within academic discourse. One of the most notable contributions to the study of Ukrainian alternative music was M. Sonevitsky's *et al.* (2023) monograph. The authors provided an interdisciplinary analysis of Kyiv's cultural environment in the 1980s, with particular emphasis on the formation

of informal musical infrastructures (the so-called "tusovka"), the functioning of the underground scene, and its interaction with the Soviet ideological system. Special attention was devoted to the early work of Vopli Vidopliassova as a representative example of the late-Soviet underground rock. Researchers further highlighted the use of the Ukrainian language, ethnic symbolism, and irony as strategies of cultural resistance and decolonial expression, offering a new perspective on the articulation of national identity through music.

Another significant publication contributing to the understanding of the formation of the alternative rock

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phenomenon in Ukraine was an anthology by O. Yevtushenko (2004). In this work, the author examined the creative output of Ukrainian rock bands from the 1960s to the 1990s and provided an overview of the development of rock music across major Ukrainian cities, including Kyiv, Lviv, Kharkiv, Odesa, Dnipro, and Ivano-Frankivsk. The publication was particularly valuable for its historiographical approach, which enabled researchers to trace the diversity of local models of rock development in Ukraine, while also offering a rich corpus of factual material that contributed to the reconstruction of the national rock narrative. Beyond scholarly and journalistic contributions, researcher played a crucial role in popularising and archiving Ukrainian rock culture through radio programmes and the multimedia project “Ukrainian rock: Anthology on YouTube”, which systematically documented the evolution of the national rock movement.

Theoretical foundations for analysing alternative rock through the lens of cultural resistance and self-organisation had been established by G. McKay (1998), who introduced the concept of “DIY culture”, defining it as a Do-It-Yourself ethos of independent and non-commercial practices in art and music. Unlike more straightforwardly cultural forms of resistance, scientist emphasised that DIY culture was distinguished by a strong focus on “actually doing something” in the social and political sphere, whether through producing and distributing an alternative press or organising “one-off spectacular mediagenic stunts”. Also, G. McKay (2023) emphasised DIY not only as practice, but as a form of self-identification within countercultural communities. This framework was highly relevant to the Ukrainian context, where alternative scenes of the 1980s and 1990s evolved outside official institutions through self-recording, zines, festivals, and grassroots networks. In Ukrainian scholarship, DIY culture and alternative rock had been addressed by T. Kovach (2024), who explored the subcultural specificity, locality, and educational potential of these practices. The author’s observations corresponded to the historical development of the Ukrainian alternative scene, which frequently operated without institutional support, relying instead on practices such as self-recording, fanzines, and independent festivals.

In the Ukrainian scholarly discourse on the topic of several studies, which had addressed different aspects of rock and alternative music. Research had contributed to situating Ukrainian rock in relation to its aesthetic orientations, its function as a form of youth protest, and its role as an underground cultural sphere with distinct sociocultural functions. O. Yakhno (2023) traced the development of Ukrainian rock, which provided an important foundation for this study, beginning with the 1980s. Scientist classified Ukrainian rock bands into three aesthetic orientations: “radically traditional”, “lyrical-melodic”, and “avant-garde experimental”. This typology was particularly valuable for contextualising the stylistic

premises of the Ukrainian alternative rock scene. M. Zaluzhnyi (2024) acknowledged the emergence of underground culture as a form of youth protest and self-expression, but addressed it only within the framework of Soviet mass culture in Ukraine, without analysing the artistic practices of the underground. In contrast, S. Ovcharenko (2023), using a systemic and cultural-reconstructive approach, traced the emergence and transformation of youth musical subcultures in both totalitarian and post-totalitarian contexts. The researcher interpreted the Ukrainian underground as a “parallel reality of the art scene under totalitarianism” and a form of “voluntary cultural underground”, further defining it as a polysystemic phenomenon that reflected the reality of protest-oriented cultural production. Taken together, these perspectives provided a necessary scholarly background for understanding the cultural, aesthetic, and political conditions that shaped the rise of Ukrainian alternative rock. So, the aim of research was to examine Ukrainian alternative rock of the 1980s-1990s as a distinct cultural formation. The research addressed several tasks: identifying the sociocultural conditions that fostered the genre’s rise; investigating local music scenes and festivals as centres of subcultural self-organisation in the context of interdisciplinary expression and performative practices; and tracing the influence of DIY culture within this ecosystem.

## Materials and Methods

An interdisciplinary approach had been employed in this study, combining historical-cultural, sociocultural, musicological, and sociological methods. Such a comprehensive approach made it possible to examine Ukrainian alternative rock not only as a musical phenomenon, but also as a sociocultural formation that emerged and operated within the transitional dynamics of the 1980s and 1990s. The empirical basis of the study was Ukrainian alternative bands of the 1980s and 1990s – Enei, Vopli Vidopliassova, Braty Hadiukiny, Adem, Kolezkyi Asesor, Rabbota KHO, Sestrychka Vika, Kazma-Kazma, Vsiak Vypadok, Er.Dzhaz, Klub Unylykh Lits, and archival materials from samizdat magazines (fanzines), preserved in personal collections and representing an important channel of subcultural communication. Additional data were obtained from digital resources, for example Slukh (Saltykov, 2022), Kyiv Rock Club (n.d.), Cheremshyna (Kovalskyi, n.d.), Amnesia (Drozd & Sheshuryak, 2021). Historical-cultural and sociocultural methods were applied to reconstruct the dynamics of the alternative scene and to situate it within broader societal transformations. The systemic approach allowed for the conceptualisation of Ukrainian alternative rock as a multidimensional phenomenon with its own infrastructure, stylistics, and aesthetics. Genre-stylistic, comparative, and analytical methods were employed for close examination of individual bands, the poetics, stage practices, and interactions with the cultural context.

This article applied a holistic interdisciplinary framework that integrated these approaches, placing particular emphasis on the role of DIY strategies as tools of self-expression and as mechanisms for building independent cultural infrastructures during a time of systemic transformation. Particular attention was devoted to DIY ethics, understood as a key mode of self-organisation and countercultural expression. Its various manifestations, including self-recording, independent publishing (*samizdat*), and visual communication, were explored through methods of media and visual analysis. The qualitative analysis of these materials revealed the internal logic and trajectories of alternative musical culture within its sociocultural and historical context. The research procedure unfolded in several stages: 1) collection and systematisation of empirical materials; 2) contextualisation within the broader historical-cultural environment; 3) analytical processing of audio and textual sources; 4) interpretation of results in terms of musical aesthetics, genre, sociocultural functions, and cultural resistance. Each stage of the analysis was situated within the broader context of DIY practices and subcultural dynamics of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, which provided a key interpretative framework for understanding modes of self-organisation, cultural autonomy, and countercultural expression in the Ukrainian alternative rock scene.

## Results and Discussion

The emergence of alternative rock in Ukraine during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century must be viewed in the broader context of global transformations in the sociocultural function of music. As music became a medium for political dissent and youth-led critique, alternative rock crystallised as a form of cultural resistance and identity negotiation. In Ukraine, these dynamics were intensified by the weakening of Soviet ideological control and the search for new cultural expressions in the 1990s. Rather than merely reflecting global trends, the protest-oriented Ukrainian rock scene arose in direct response to the collapse of Soviet cultural hegemony and the vacuum it left behind. Unlike in Western contexts, where alternative rock music developed as an expression of countercultural rebellion, its trajectory in Ukraine followed a different path. Prior to the 1990s, Ukrainian alternative rock did not oppose mainstream entertainment, but rather positioned itself in opposition to the state-controlled cultural apparatus. Up to 1991, it was subject to censorship, ideological scrutiny, and infrastructural exclusion. As M. Yoffe (2024) observed, there were “periods of different attitudes towards rock music in the USSR, ranging from surprised watchfulness to cautious acceptance and attempts to direct and co-opt this new musical fad... to KGB surveillance and persecution”. Despite such repression, rock music functioned as an unofficial, underground practice, bearing a strong countercultural and socially engaged charge. As V. Ovsianikov (2022) noted, “this protest potential reveals urgent social concerns, while the

specifically Western and often aggressive rock sound serves as a supporting element that shapes the listener’s emotional experience”.

During the 1960s and 1970s, Ukrainian rock artists began searching for creative outlets under the guise of VIA (Vocal-Instrumental Ensembles), which provided limited institutional cover. This period also saw the rise of the “big-beat” style, a synthesis of Western genres – rock and roll, doo-wop, rhythm and blues, soul – which, according to D. Kocherzhuk (2023), “served as a precursor to the emergence of new musical currents and directions in Ukrainian pop music”. These stylistic experiments were reflected in the work of groups such as Smerichka, Arnika, Hutsuly, Enei, and Kobza. Linguistic politics also shaped the ideological foundation of Ukrainian alternative rock. From its inception, lyrics occupied a central role, with poetic content often conveying the emotional and conceptual depth of the music. As M. Zaluzhnyi (2024) pointed out, “in the 1960s and 1970s, Ukrainian rock music was characterised by relatively unremarkable accompaniment, but already stood out for its vivid poetic decisions and the depth of its lyrical content”. Despite restrictions, many artists insisted on performing in Ukrainian. One of the most notable examples was the Kyiv-based group Enei, whose Ukrainian-language recordings and televised performances were systematically destroyed in the early 1970s. The desire to preserve language through music became one of the defining elements of the alternative scene. As I. Dovzhynets *et al.* (2023) emphasised, “Ukrainian music is an important element of a unifying cultural heritage”.

By the 1980s, Ukrainian rock underwent substantial stylistic diversification as young audiences gained increased access to Western recordings – often smuggled or brought from Warsaw Pact countries. Copied on home dubbing equipment, these materials circulated widely among amateur rock communities. Despite continued ideological pressure, music with protest themes and a spirit of resistance gained popularity. As V. Kudelia (2023) noted, “responsibility for the development of this direction at that time was assumed by the Komsomol, in particular through the establishment of rock clubs, the organisation of festivals, and active media coverage”. In parallel, greater availability of musical instruments, wider access to music education, and the auditory influence of Western styles facilitated the genre’s practical adoption, so that what had once been a fragmented underground culture was becoming a coordinated alternative scene.

Although global punk culture emerged in the late 1960s, its influence reached Ukraine only by the mid-1980s, due to Soviet isolationism. From this point, the Ukrainian alternative scene gained strength, represented by groups such as Vopli Vidopliassova, Braty Hadiukiny, Skryabin and others. While these bands were recognised as central to Ukraine’s rock canon, at the time it operated on the margins of the mainstream, embodying a distinctly alternative sound. Throughout the 1980s, “Ukrainian

rock moved from underground to legalisation, from flat concerts to full stadiums, from imitating foreign songs to original creativity" (Zaluzhnyi, 2024). By the mid-1980s, many previously underground bands began to enter the public sphere. The changing cultural climate enabled access to new performance venues, such as rock clubs, houses of culture, and officially sanctioned festivals. A notable sign of this transformation was the growing institutional support for large-scale musical events and the increasing media visibility. "The renewed interest in Ukrainian rock was particularly encouraged by the organisation and widespread media coverage of numerous new republican and regional festivals" (Yakhno, 2023). One of the earliest rock festivals in the USSR, Debut-86, took place in 1986 at the Dnipro House of Culture in Kyiv. Organised as an amateur competition, it gave participants access to a professional stage and created opportunities for peer engagement and collective reflection (Kyiv Rock Club, n.d.). The widespread use of Ukrainian in performances was particularly striking during a period of active Russification. Notable Kyiv-based acts included Adem, Kvartyra No.50, Titanik, Tsvirkunove Chyslo, Uksusnyk, TOK, SAD. In the autumn of 1986, Kyiv opened its first official rock club, following similar initiatives in other cities. Based in the Bolshevik Palace of Culture, the club provided rehearsal space, instruments, and professional equipment. Its activity catalysed the emergence of numerous alternative bands such as Slid, Zateryannyi Mir, Banita Baida, Vavylon, Ivanov Down, Rabbota KHO, Kolezkyi Asesor and others. The creative output of these groups had been described as "difficult to interpret or classify – it evokes a kind of urbanism, depressive and blurred musical configurations, and at the same time a fragmented sonic landscape marked by a unique musical hypnosis and psychedelia" (Ovcharenko, 2023).

Adem, formed in 1983, was among the earliest Ukrainian bands to pursue alternative and heavy metal sounds, often facing institutional resistance and police scrutiny. Despite these challenges, the band won the "Audience favourite" award at Debut-86, affirming its resonance with local audiences. During the second half of the 1980s, Adem became a key figure in Kyiv's alternative scene, noted for its raw intensity and influential live performances. In the 1990s, the group's sound evolved to incorporate grunge and funk elements. It later merged with the hip-hop group DRAGZ to form D.A.Z.MACHINE, a project that reflected the emerging stylistic hybridisation of post-Soviet alternative music (Yevtushenko, 2004). Kolezkyi Asesor, considered a cult phenomenon of Kyiv's late Soviet underground, was among the most notable bands to emerge from Ukraine's alternative rock scene of the 1980s and early 1990s. The public debut took place in the spring of 1988 at the Rock-Dialog festival in Kyiv, a key platform for emerging underground musicians. The creative peak came between 1987 and 1993. All core members (Vasyl Hoidenko, Hlib Butuzov, Sashko Kievtsvev, Oleksii

Ryndenko) were graduated of Kyiv Polytechnic Institute, which by the late 1980s had become a vibrant site of musical experimentation and student-led subcultural activity (Yevtushenko, 2004). Kolezkyi Asesor stood out for the bold musical vision and formal innovation, blending art rock with post-punk and employing unconventional structures and genre-defying arrangements. The live shows were notable for grotesque sonic textures, irreverent lyrics, and provocative stage design. Frontman Vasyl Hoidenko crafted a theatrical visual identity that combined historical references – including military coats, Renaissance costumes, and masks – with absurd elements such as oversized pajamas. This deliberate polystylistic contrast reflected the group's Dadaist influences and surrealist tendencies. Positioned at the forefront of Ukraine's alternative rock movement, the performances often provoked a sense of cultural rupture, using noise, poetic fragmentation, and spontaneous theatrics as instruments of aesthetic resistance.

In 1988, the Kyiv-based bands Kolezkyi Asesor, Vopli Vidopliassova, Rabbota KHO, and Er.Dzhaz jointly established an artistic coalition known as the Rok-Art. Each of these bands represented a distinct strand within the broader field of Ukrainian alternative music, ranging from punk and post-punk to psychedelia and new age. The initiative emerged as a response to growing internal tensions within the official Kyiv Rock Club (n.d.), from which many independent artists increasingly kept the distance. At the helm of the new, emerging countercultural movement stood Oleksandr Lytovka, whose managerial role in legendary Ukrainian alternative bands helped shape the foundations of an independent youth scene. The coalition's primary performance space in 1988 was a concert and dance hall located in Holosiivskyi Park. Symbolically, this venue was situated on the opposite side of the city from the Bolshevik Palace of Culture, which housed the state-sanctioned rock club. This alternative venue became a vibrant nucleus for concerts and experimental festivals, distinguished by the high degree of aesthetic freedom and nonconformist spirit. Rok-Art went on to tour extensively across Ukraine, throughout the former Soviet republics, and abroad, with notable performances in Poland and Scotland. Like many participants in the Ukrainian rock underground of the time, the musicians opted for self-production and independent distribution of the albums, bypassing official Soviet recording studios. The collective came to symbolise not only cultural resistance, but also the experimental ethos that defined Kyiv's late-1980s music scene, serving as a key chapter in the development of Ukrainian alternative rock.

A major impetus for the popularisation of punk and alternative rock in Ukraine came with the launch of the Chervona Ruta festival, first held in Chernivtsi in 1989. According to P. Long (2024), the event "spurred an explosion of yet another stylistic current in Ukrainian music – punk rock". The top prize in the "Rock music" category was awarded to the Lviv-based punk-rock

singer Sestrichka Vika, while second place went to the band Braty Hadiukiny. Both acts captivated the jury and audiences through the rebellious punk sonics and irony-laden lyrics. The inaugural edition of Chervona Ruta can be interpreted more broadly as an act of nonconformist cultural resistance that challenged institutional structures. Local authorities attempted to relocate the rock stage outside the city limits, denied accreditation to numerous performers. As such, the festival became emblematic of underground artistic expression clashing with the Soviet cultural system. One of the most vivid manifestations of the Lviv alternative rock-scene at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s was the creative synergy between the punk-influenced band Braty Hadiukiny and singer Sestrichka Vika (Viktoriia Vradii). Both emerged as emblematic figures of local cultural resistance, combining musical eclecticism with social satire and Galician linguistic colour. Braty Hadiukiny, founded in 1988, developed a hybrid style blending punk, reggae, ska, blues, and folk, while Sestrichka Vika – whose early roots lay in folk-beat – embraced a rebellious artistic persona, infusing the performances with irony, theatricality, and political critique. The collaboration, particularly visible at the Chervona Ruta festival and on landmark recordings, helped define the sound and ethos of Western Ukrainian alternative rock. As noted by S. Manko (2021), “the artistic mastery was marked by an especially rich and emotionally charged sonic character”. This convergence

of satire, stylistic hybridity, and regional identity produced a unique form of musical dissent that significantly shaped the broader Ukrainian underground.

In the mid-1980s, Odesa became the first Ukrainian city to establish a formal rock club, which evolved into a major centre of musical life in the Soviet Union. Founded in 1986 under the auspices of youth organisations, the Odesa City Rock Club unified more than twenty diverse bands, including Bastion, Krater, Provintsiia, and Igrushka (Yevtushenko, 2004). The club fostered a distinct musical culture marked by melodic richness, high technical proficiency, and a strong sense of artistic integrity. Unlike the typical marginalisation associated with rock musicians, Odesa’s scene was shaped by highly educated artists, who actively resisted Soviet ideological expectations. Throughout the late 1980s, Odesa rock bands participated in numerous regional and national festivals, earning a reputation for stylistic diversity, solidarity, and professionalism. This vibrant period was captured in the film *Dysk-Zhokey* (1987). The Odesa scene’s emphasis on cooperation, musical eclecticism, and cultural resilience secured its unique place in the history of Ukrainian alternative rock. Among the alternative rock bands that emerged in the late 1980s and continued the creative activity into the 1990s, several became emblematic of the evolving Ukrainian scene. The stylistic variety, geographical spread, and artistic distinctiveness were outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Key Ukrainian alternative rock bands of the late 1980s-1990s

Band	City	Genre/Style	Distinctive features
Tzukor-Bila Smert	Kyiv	Gothic-inspired alternative	Dark atmosphere, theatrical performance
Viy	Kyiv	Dark-ethnic-fusion	Folk motifs combined with post-punk aesthetics
Tsvirkunove Chyslo	Kyiv	Art-jazz-rock	Experimental structure, improvisational approach
Chaika	Kharkiv	Funk-influenced alternative	Groove-oriented sound, fusion with jazz elements
KPP	Kharkiv	Hard-n-heavy rock	Strong guitar riffs, underground club scene presence
Liuk	Kharkiv	Experimental rock	Electronic and jazz-infused textures
Foa-Hoka	Chernihiv	Psychedelic rock	Use of ambient soundscapes and multimedia elements
TOK	Dnipro	Heavy metal/alternative	Powerful sound, socially critical lyrics
SAD	Dnipro	Metal/post-punk	Expressionistic vocal style, dark imagery
Galaktyka	Dnipro	Metal-rock	Cosmic thematics, energetic stage presence
999	Lviv	Eclectic heavy metal/gothic rock	Deliberately eclectic and unpredictable style
Zhaba v dyryzhabli	Kyiv	Punk-rock with theatrical elements	Founded by Bohdan Kharchenko (professional clown), ironic and absurdist performance aesthetics

**Source:** developed by the author

A distinctive feature of the alternative rock scene in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s was the increasingly performative self-identification of both musicians and the audiences, who began to actively mark out the identity through characteristic clothing and accessories. Just as in the West during the 1980s, in Ukraine “it was a challenge to the established rules and fashion of that time, it was even more like a protest against neatness and completeness” (Kyselova *et al.*, 2021). The “neformaly” (nonconformists) of the 1990s, while

listening to rock music, expressed the protest not against party officials, but rather against the older generation. This was a form of generational rebellion directed at the lingering “soviet mentality” that continued to shape the worldview of those, who had grown up in the USSR, and “the post-communist past, therefore, has not been completely overcome” (Vashchenko *et al.*, 2022). In the 1990s, self-identification within various branches of alternative rock was often articulated through the performative presentation of “otherness” at rock festivals.

This period witnessed the emergence of numerous festivals across Ukraine, some of which were oriented toward specific musical genres. Notable examples included the rock festivals Rock'n'Roll Tavriiskyi, Nivroku, Taras Bulba, and Rock-Exystentsia (Yevtushenko, 2004). Scientists M. Besaha *et al.* (2022) noted that one significant initiative from this period was the following: "in 1990, a young generation of Lviv activists and artists organised the Vyvykh alternative culture festival, which was repeated in 1992".

A product of the same wave of cultural self-organisation was the Alternatyva festival, held in 1994 and 1995 at the Ukraine Sports Palace in Lviv. It became one of the key platforms for presenting non-commercial and experimental music, contributing significantly to the development of an interregional community within the Ukrainian musical underground. Alternatyva was among the earliest large-scale efforts in the 1990s to curate a platform in Ukraine dedicated exclusively to independent and non-commercial music. This event not only demonstrated a high level of youth interest in the alternative scene, but also helped to establish new cultural reference points for independent Ukrainian music. The festival functioned as an interregional cultural platform, bringing together representatives from various local scenes, including the Kyiv Rock Club, Kharkiv's Nova Stsenia art community, Lviv-based bands, and participants from other Ukrainian cities. Its concept was rooted in presenting a wide spectrum of independent music, ranging from already established bands (such as Vopli Vidopliassova and Plach Yeremii) to lesser-known formations that remained in the underground and disappeared from the broader cultural field despite the experimental or innovative potential (including 999, Reliktovi vantazhivky, Nekropol, and Apelsynove nepodobsvo). The presence of international performers, most notably the British band The Ukrainians, "underscored the openness of the Ukrainian scene to transnational influences and dialogue" (Sherman & Sheshuryak, 2021).

One of the leading figures of Ukraine's 1990s rock-alternative scene was the Kharkiv-based ensemble Kazma-Kazma. Founded in 1991 by multi-instrumentalist Yevhen Khodosh and flutist Dmytro Kurovskyi, both formerly of the folk-punk band Tovarysh, the group expanded into a seven-piece "rock orchestra" with members on drums, French horn, trumpet, bassoon, and piano. Among the members was Oleh Mykhailiuta (Fozzy), later a key figure in TNMK (Yevtushenko, 2004). Kazma-Kazma blended folk-punk, art metal, progressive rock, and Renaissance-inspired stylisations into a unique, eclectic sound. The lyrics, resembling futurist poetry styled as madrigals and sonnets, were rich in symbolism and Dadaist irony. Early performances featured large abstract paintings by Dmytro Kurovskyi, emphasising the experimental aesthetic. Active on the alternative festival circuit for six years, the band gradually shifted from folk-punk toward more meditative, post-industrial gothic

influences, especially after Dmytro Kurovskyi's departure to industrial project Foa-Hoka, which marked a decline in Kazma-Kazma's prominence. It was possible to draw parallels between Kolezkyi Asesor and Kazma-Kazma. Both represented distinct yet convergent trajectories of experimental practice within the Ukrainian alternative scene. While Kolezkyi Asesor emphasised sonic provocation, aesthetic dissonance, and performative absurdism, Kazma-Kazma combined literary experimentation with complex musical hybridity rooted in folk-punk and art-rock traditions. In different ways, both bands expanded the conceptual and stylistic boundaries of Ukrainian underground music, foregrounding a Dadaist sensibility and a critical rethinking of cultural norms. Among the key figures of Odesa's underground culture in the early 1990s was Stas Podlypskyi, founder of the project Klub Unylykh Lits (KUL). The band cultivated a distinctive style of spirited and intelligent punk rock, characterised by humour, occasional use of informal language, and a consciously non-conformist aesthetic. Despite numerous lineup changes and periods, when Podlypskyi stepped away to pursue an uncompromising rock-and-roll lifestyle, each return of KUL to the stage, even after long interruptions, consistently generated notable nostalgic excitement among the Odesa audience.

Another example of Kyiv's 1990s alternative scene was the group Vsiak Vypadok, founded in 1994 by bassist Oleh Putiatin and vocalist-guitarist Yevhen Bartnychuk. Oleh Putiatin had previously led the experimental projects Tsvirkunove Chyslo and Sluchay Chego. After recording the debut album Tish Damsha, the band gained recognition at the 1995 Chervona Ruta festival and moved toward avant-garde experimentation. The 1995 album Toho marked a shift toward conceptual and genre-defying work, integrating elements of jazz rock, psychedelic, art rock, and folk. Later albums such as Fonari, Psykhopompa, Trava-Baiun, and Zhidkie svoistva explicitly rejected genre classifications. Known for absurdist multimedia performances, the group's improvisational style and instrumental complexity bridged music and theatre – particularly through collaboration with the Telniuk Sisters in the 2001 stage production Ukrainskyi burzhuažnyi natsionalist (Kovalskyi, n.d.). As such, Vsiak Vypadok represented a vital strand in the development of Ukrainian alternative rock, serving as a platform for innovation, genre hybridisation, and artistic self-expression.

Therefore, it was worth noting that the lifting of Soviet-era restrictions on rock music in the 1990s led to two key developments. The first was that many bands that had emerged in the 1980s gradually lost the original alternative identity and transitioned into the mainstream. A prominent example was Vopli Vidopliassova, whose increasing popularity resulted in significant changes to the group's lineup. In the mid-1990s, guitarist Yurii Zdorenko and bassist Pipa left the band and went on to form Borshch, a project characterised by a heavier, less conventional sound. Later, in 2008, Pipa

launched the own project, @Traktor, which explored a raw and aggressive style of punk grounded in classic sonic aesthetics. The second key development was the intensification of subcultural life across Ukraine. While S. Ovcharenko (2023) identified Kharkiv, Kyiv, Odesa, and Lviv as the primary epicentres of this activity during the 1990s, the growth of alternative rock extended well beyond these major cities. During 1990-2000, Ukraine witnessed the emergence and diversification of alternative rock styles across a wide range of genres. This momentum was not confined to large urban centres, but also took root in smaller towns, where local scenes developed around youth clubs, informal collectives, and grassroots festivals. Regional bands and communities cultivated distinct sonic identities that blended local cultural influences with global rock aesthetics. These decentralised networks of musicians and audiences facilitated the exchange of ideas and fostered a broader sense of belonging to a cultural movement that positioned itself in opposition both to the Soviet legacy and to the emerging commercial mainstream.

The development of Ukrainian alternative rock diverged notably from its Western analogues, shaped by the intertemporal period spanning the 1980s-1990s. During this transitional moment, Ukraine's musical landscape existed between the decline of state-controlled socialist cultural policy and the rise of both post-Soviet counterculture and Western-style commercial music industries. This context fostered some of the most original and culturally resonant expressions of Ukrainian alternative rock. As R. Fürst (2021) observed that "rock and its accompanying subcultures, which voiced the rebellious attitudes of young people against the communist political establishments in these regions in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, expanded to the point of becoming a challenge for the local regimes, and eventually provided the victorious soundtrack to the Eastern and Central European regimes' domino-effect collapse in the 1990s". In the Ukrainian context, this cultural rupture was exemplified by events such as the 1989 Chervona Ruta festival. This publicly marked the ascendancy of musical dissent and subcultural expression. Therefore, the social function of alternative rock in Ukraine during its time as part of the USSR was fundamentally different. As R. Fürst (2021) noted, "alternative rock under communist regimes played a more significant social role, as it represented the minority that rejected official mass culture – which was the case in East Europe until 1989". This observation was particularly relevant to the Ukrainian context, where both elite and popular art forms often acquired an underground status due to the nonconformist stance. Alternative rock, in this case, served not only as a medium of aesthetic experimentation, but also as a site of ideological dissent. Through its opposition to cultural conformity, censorship, and the limitations imposed by the Soviet system, it functioned as a politically charged expression of a marginalised,

anti-establishment cultural stratum. As S. Ovcharenko (2023) noted, "the underground as a parallel reality of the art scene under totalitarianism is defined as the voluntary underground of cultural creation". This position aligned with the interpretation of alternative rock as a form of cultural resistance expressing the values and identity of nonconformist, anti-Soviet constituencies within late socialist society. This countercultural opposition partially aligned with the idea expressed by A.B. Clark & A.J. Lonsdale (2023), who argued that "the fans of these oppositional musical styles (i.e., hard rock, heavy metal, punk) were uniquely more inclined to judge the social groups more favourably".

Ultimately, one of the most defining features of alternative rock was, as G. Smirnova (2021) put it, "the quest for making the listener step out of the comfort zone". This idea fully aligned with the aesthetic of Ukrainian alternative rock during the 1980s-1990s. In the 1980s, the Ukrainian alternative rock-scene emerged in response to the officially sanctioned Soviet estrada and ideologised mass culture. This music challenged conventional stylistic norms and addressed topics that were taboo in the official discourse. The core aim of "making the listener step out of the comfort zone" was achieved both through unconventional sound, form, and performance style, and through provocative, subversive lyrical content. In the 1990s, following the disappearance of censorship restrictions, this impulse only intensified. Independent bands focused less on pleasing the audience and more on provoking thought, resisting mainstream "pop" culture, and experimenting across genres. The principle of challenging passive music consumption became one of the defining features of the Ukrainian alternative scene at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Melnyk, 2024).

Thus, in the 1990s, Ukrainian alternative rock made a distinct ideological leap, aligning itself more closely with the trajectory of Western alternative movements. Ideologically, it came to serve as a counterpart to the emerging Western-style mainstream music industry, which was beginning to take shape in Ukraine by imitating European and American models. As noted by O. Vashchenko *et al.* (2022), "Ukrainian listeners have been actively involved in the dissemination of European music". However, unlike the broader European and American trajectories in the development of alternative rock, the Ukrainian alternative scene wasn't transition into the realm of mainstream entertainment and had remained firmly rooted in the underground. In Ukraine, alternative rock still wasn't reflecting a widespread social demand. It aligned closely with the aesthetic associated with the DIY ethos – a framework that has shaped Western punk comradeship since the 1980s. J.C. Goshert (2022) identified punk comradeship as "the mechanism of social enculturation that reorients punk into an inclusionary, activist endeavour working in its own interests rather than those of the culture industry". This notion resonated with the Ukrainian experience, where alternative

rock continued to function less as a commercial product and more as a form of grassroots cultural resistance and self-organisation.

DIY within countercultural movements functioned as a mode of self-identification and a means of asserting autonomy through resistance to commercialisation. This dynamic, which was likewise characteristic of the Ukrainian alternative scene of the late 1980s-1990s, aligns with broader scholarly interpretations of DIY as a form of cultural resistance and self-organisation within youth subcultures operating outside mainstream structures (McKay, 1998; Kovach, 2024). The DIY ethos rests on several core principles: it fosters open creative communities, supports self-managed distribution networks ("distros"), and prioritises self-funded releases that are typically sold at live events and feature handcrafted visual design, including album covers.

Alternative rock in Ukraine, like much of the country's musical underground, already exhibited key features of the DIY ethos as early as the 1980s. In the Soviet

era, Ukrainian alternative bands were denied access to official recording studios due to ideological restrictions. By the early 1990s, the recording industry in Ukraine remained underdeveloped, prompting most groups to self-record and distribute the work. This DIY circulation was complemented by informal platforms such as the so-called "Balka" – a regular informal marketplace, where music enthusiasts and unofficial vendors exchanged vinyl records, cassettes, posters, and other forms of cultural paraphernalia. Such spaces became sites not only of economic exchange, but also of symbolic and subcultural significance, sustaining an emergent musical public sphere outside both state and commercial institutions. The educational and communicative dimensions of the DIY ethos in Ukraine manifested not only through informal practices of music production and distribution, but also through the emergence of independent music periodicals and grassroots initiatives that sustained local alternative scenes. Table 2 presented an overview of major Ukrainian samizdat rock magazines of the 1980s-1990s.

**Table 2.** Key Ukrainian samizdat rock magazines (1980s-1990s)

Title	City/Region	Years of publication	Editors	Content/Focus	Distinctive features and significance
KiMik ("Kyivskyi mikrofon" – Kyiv Microphone)	Kyiv	1987 (2 issues)	Y. Dunaiev	Reviews of early Kyiv rock performances and articles on the history of rock music	The first Kyiv rock magazine, focused on the emerging scene of the mid-1980s
Huchnomovets ("Loudspeaker")	Kyiv	1988-1990 (6 issues)	T. Ezhova, K. Ezhov, V. Shamrai, and others	Interviews, concert and album reviews, cultural essays	Issued by the Kyiv Rok-Art association, examined regional rock phenomena across Ukraine
Bonba	Kyiv	1988 (2 issues)	V. Shamrai (manager of the band Kolezhskyi Asesor)	Satirical essays, provocative humour. Featured conceptual articles and experimental rock commentary	Gained cult notoriety for its biting irony and provocative, satirical tone, reflecting the intellectual and rebellious spirit of Kyiv's underground scene
Subyektykon	Kyiv	1987-1989 (5 issues)	G. Pavlov	Punk review, aggressive and sarcastic style	Anti-conceptual, unconventional project based on the inner-scene colour and atmosphere
Halas	Kyiv	1996-1998 (published monthly)	O. Yevtushenko (Editor-in-Chief)	Analytical essays, rock journalism, scene documentation	A crucial platform for documenting and analysing the emerging Ukrainian rock culture
Polozhenie Del	Kharkiv	1988-early 1990s	S. Myasoedov and others	Ukrainian rock development, indie bands, festivals	Provided systematic coverage of regional music scenes
Rock Courier (later evolving into Rock'n'Roll Kharkivshchyna)	Kharkiv	1985-1987	Y. Podolskyi and others	Focused on documenting the early Kharkiv rock scene; featured reviews, band profiles, and reports on concerts	Provided rare primary documentation of the local scene's formation

Table 2, *Continued*

Title	City/Region	Years of publication	Editors	Content/Focus	Distinctive features and significance
Volapyuk	Dnipro	1987-1988 (6 issues)	D. Desyaterik	Local rock scene (Reportazh, TOK)	An earnest attempt to mythologise the Southern Ukrainian rock scene
Shism	Sumy	1993 (4 issues)	L. Savin	Metal scene, extremist aesthetics	English-language publication distributed in Belgium, controversial in tone
Lystva	Luhansk	1988-1990 (4 issues)	V. Basovskiy, O. Ivashev, O. Pritykin, Yu. Tkachenko, K. Karpets	Donbas rock, with Luhansk rock at the forefront.	Combined regional reporting with social commentary and satire
Hey-hop!	Ivano-Frankivsk	1988-1989 (4 issues)	Yu. Kosik	Punk rock; subcultural slang debates, interviews from concerts and festivals	Reflection of the creative pluralism of the Ukrainian underground

Source: based on D. Antsybor (2024)

Analysed, independent media outlets played a formative role in raising public awareness, cultivating musical communities, and circulating knowledge outside formal institutions – functions that align with the DIY ethos and its broader emphasis on cultural autonomy and self-organisation. As D. Antsybor (2024) observed, “the creation of such magazines fully embodied the principles of DIY: to produce an edition from scratch and distribute it among insiders, thereby nurturing and expanding the subcultural environment”. Such practices of self-organisation, self-publishing, and peer-to-peer distribution underscored, how the Ukrainian alternative rock community of the late 1980s and 1990s embodied the core values of the DIY ethos. This was evident not only in its emphasis on autonomy, collectivism, and non-commercial cultural production, but also in the development of alternative systems of knowledge transmission and artistic formation based on lived experience, mutual support, and resistance to institutional hierarchies.

The educational potential of the DIY ethos manifested not only through independent journalism and autonomous music production, but also through interdisciplinary forms of cultural exchange that broadened the possibilities for self-expression under new socio-cultural conditions. A striking illustration of this dynamic was the emergence of Ukrainian rock poetry in the 1990s, particularly through collaborations between poets from the Lviv-based Bu-Ba-Bu literary group (Viktor Neborak, Oleksandr Irvanets, and Yurii Andrukhovych) and musicians from bands such as Mertyvi Piven and Plach Yeremii. As noted by N. Babii (2021), “the festival movement, along with numerous concerts, rallies, and cultural events in open urban spaces during the 1990s, contributed to the collaboration between poets and musicians”, fostering a unique atmosphere of openness and cross-disciplinary innovation. The movement of poetic

text from the printed page into the sonic space of rock compositions functioned as both a cultural experiment and a means of dissolving the boundaries between “high” and “low” art, between authorship and performance, and between individual and collective modes of expression. Such collaborations can be viewed as localised expressions of the DIY ethos in Ukraine, blending creative autonomy with alternative models of cultural production that operated independently of both state institutions and commercial industries.

The constraints of the Soviet cultural environment in the 1980s, particularly the rigid control over official music infrastructure, gave rise to informal initiatives. Among the most notable were local rock clubs, which functioned as key hubs of the underground scene. As O. Sapozhnik (2024) observed, “clubs in different cities worked closely with each other and constantly organised festivals. Rock clubs were created by enthusiasts and musicians, so such clubs were a symbiosis of a rehearsal base, a concert venue, an information centre and a replication company”. These clubs served not only as rehearsal and performance spaces, but also as informal information networks, platforms for peer exchange among musicians, and centres for independent creative output. The activities ranged from recording demo tapes and circulating bootleg concert footage to producing zines and other alternative media. This self-organised model closely aligned with the DIY ethos that defined the alternative scene, enabling it to function independently of official institutions. In the Soviet context, such autonomy carried both aesthetic and political weight: these clubs fostered free self-expression and allowed alternative music to thrive as a form of counterculture in opposition to state-sanctioned socialist mass culture. It was from these grassroots efforts that a uniquely Ukrainian alternative rock scene emerged

in the 1990s, rooted in local culture and responsive to wider European resistance movements.

In examining the historical, cultural, and political conditions that gave rise to DIY culture, T. Kovach (2024) emphasised its “protest-driven nature”, which “shaped alternative modes of self-expression across diverse social settings”. The emergence of Ukrainian alternative rock during the intertemporal period between the collapse of the Soviet Union and the formation of an independent national culture allowed it to merge nonconformist protest with the pursuit of new aesthetic forms. Developed outside the structures of official culture, this movement reflected the core principles of the DIY ethos, including autonomous distribution, grassroots communities, and independent media. In this context, Ukrainian alternative rock served not only aesthetic, but also sociopolitical, educational, and identity-building functions. It became a platform for self-reflection, cultural resistance, and the articulation of a new cultural paradigm. This formative moment was therefore crucial for understanding both the trajectory of national rock culture and the broader dynamics of post-totalitarian cultural resistance. Ukrainian alternative rock in the 1980s and 1990s should be seen not merely as a musical phenomenon, but as a form of cultural self-organisation situated between two ideological systems. During this intertemporal period, alternative rock functioned as an intermediary cultural institution, remaining autonomous from both Soviet cultural orthodoxy and Western commercial music industries. Unlike many of its Western counterparts, Ukrainian alternative music was not absorbed into the mainstream. Instead, it retained its underground character and sustained the ethos of DIY as its primary mode of creative and social expression. In this sense, the Ukrainian case presented a unique example of prolonged cultural autonomy, where alternative rock generated a form of “cultural sovereignty” amid the uncertainties of national self-definition.

## Conclusions

Alternative rock in Ukraine, which first emerged in the 1980s as a response to the aesthetic and ideological constraints of Soviet state-sanctioned estrada music, gradually evolved into a complex, multi-genre system encompassing a wide range of unofficial musical practices. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the underground scene gave rise to diverse stylistic formations, collectively constituting a space of independent cultural production. This space was interpreted as a form of self-organised cultural agency, operating outside both the boundaries of ideological control and the emergent

mechanisms of commercial music industries. Unlike its Western European counterparts, Ukrainian alternative rock was rarely absorbed into the mainstream. Instead, it maintained characteristics of marginality, DIY-oriented ethics, and subcultural autonomy.

Within the intertemporal framework that marked the transition between two political and cultural paradigms, Ukraine’s alternative rock scene functioned as an informal institution that articulated a discourse of freedom, self-expression, and stylistic pluralism. In the 1980s and 1990s, the bands Adem, Kazma-Kazma, Kolezkyi Asesor, Klub Unylykh Lits (KUL), Vsiak Vypadok, and others represented key trajectories in the formation of Ukrainian alternative rock, integrating elements of post-punk stylistic markers, art-rock conceptualism, and avant-garde experimentation, thereby shaping the subsequent development of the genre. The musical practices significantly expanded the genre boundaries of Ukrainian rock music and laid the groundwork for later artistic innovations within the alternative scene. Within this broader cultural dynamic, local hubs together with festival platforms played an instrumental role in disseminating new musical forms and fostering environments of creative interaction. Of particular significance were the interdisciplinary collaborations between musicians and poets or theatre collectives. This extended the communicative reach of the alternative scene. Although there was little demand from mainstream cultural institutions, a distinct and emancipated cultural field nonetheless emerged, this field was understood as a manifestation of cultural sovereignty. So, late 20<sup>th</sup> century Ukrainian alternative rock seen as both a form of resistance and a vehicle of cultural innovation, reflecting the transformative energies of a post-totalitarian society and aligning with wider European countercultural shifts. Future research should integrate interdisciplinary and comparative perspectives to further advance the analysis of local scenes, transnational parallels, and the evolving mechanisms of cultural self-organisation within Ukrainian alternative rock.

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## Альтернативний рок в Україні у контексті DIY-практик і субкультурної динаміки кінця ХХ століття

**Анотація.** Актуальність цього дослідження зумовлена недостатньою кількістю комплексних міждисциплінарних робіт, що розглядали естетичні характеристики, субкультурну та контркультурну динаміку, а також значення етики Do-It-Yourself у формуванні автономної музичної інфраструктури. Метою дослідження було простежити становлення, еволюцію та соціокультурні функції українського альтернативного року в період 1980-1990-х років. Результати показали, що українська альтернативна рок-сцена функціонувала як форма культурної самоорганізації, незалежна як від державної ідеології, так і від музичної індустрії, що зароджувалася. Вона відображала естетику спротиву, жанрової гібридності, міждисциплінарної взаємодії (зокрема з літературою та театром) і прагнення культурного суворенітету. Етика Do-It-Yourself виступала не лише практичною стратегією виживання, а й засобом соціальної ідентифікації та політичного самовираження. Попри обмежену підтримку з боку інституцій мейнстримної культури, українська альтернативна сцена 1990-х років сформувала емансиповану культурну сферу, що може бути інтерпретована як прояв культурного суворенітету. У дослідженні визначено локальні рок-клуби, фестивалі та незалежні медіа як ключові платформи, що сприяли поширенню альтернативних музичних практик. Було підкреслено тривале збереження андеграундного характеру українського альтернативного року, який, на відміну від західних аналогів, не був повністю інтегрований у мейнстрим. Це зробило український випадок унікальним прикладом пролонгованої культурної автономії у пострадянському просторі. У статті запропоновано розглядати український альтернативний рок кінця ХХ століття як неформальний культурний інститут, що поєднував протестний та творчий потенціал у контексті посттоталітарної трансформації. Практичне значення дослідження полягає у визначені підходів до аналізу українського музичного андеграунду як форми контркультурного висловлювання та субкультурної автономії

**Ключові слова:** український рок; субкультурна ідентичність; технологія Do-It-Yourself; андеграундна музика; культурний спротив

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## Musical discography in Ukraine of the 20<sup>th</sup>-early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries: Historical, evolutionary and regional dimensions

**Abstract.** The relevance of study was determined by the need to systematise the history of Ukrainian musical discography as an integral part of the national cultural heritage, which was under threat of physical and digital loss. The purpose of research was to analyse the historical, evolutionary, and regional dimensions of the development of Ukrainian musical discography from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The complex process in the development of the Ukrainian sound recording industry was revealed. The initial stage was characterised by the activities of foreign record companies, most notably Gramophone and Syrena-Electro. The 1922-1991 period was marked by the centralisation and monopolisation of the recording industry. This era culminated in the establishment of the Kyiv branch of the Melodiya company, which became the principal platform for producing Ukrainian records. The Kyiv Sound Recording House emerged as a key institution, serving as the technological and creative centre for recording prominent Ukrainian academic and popular music artists. The 1991-2025 period was defined by market decentralisation, leading to the rapid emergence of private studios. This era witnessed the fundamental transition from analogue formats, such as vinyl records, to digital formats, including CDs and streaming platforms. This transition profoundly altered the principles governing music production, distribution, and consumption. It was revealed that throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the diaspora actively recorded and disseminated Ukrainian music abroad, effectively preserving parts of the cultural heritage that were subject to censorship within the USSR. The main challenges for preserving this heritage were physical degradation of analogue carriers and the critical need for systematic digitisation and scientific cataloguing of scattered archives. The practical significance lies in creating a scientific basis for developing a national strategy for the preservation and popularisation of Ukrainian audio heritage, including the conceptualisation of a dedicated Museum of Sound Recording

**Keywords:** audio art; sound recording; folklore; popular music; mechanical recording; digital recording; electro-musical instruments

### Introduction

The relevance of this research consisted in the comparative study of the volume of sound recordings published across the digital market, encompassing various historical media (such as reels, discs, cassettes, and records) alongside contemporary digital multimedia applications with audio materials the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The historiographical and theoretical basis for this study's analy-

sis of phonographic product evolution and its integration into broader cultural phenomena was firmly anchored in foundational scholarly works. The foundational analyses provided by V. Dutchak & M. Cherepanin (2023) were integral to establishing the core theoretical understanding of phonographic material evolution, while the contributions of I. Klymenko (2010) were instrumental in mapping

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the historical trajectory of sound recordings and their cultural integration over time. A. Bondarenko's (2022) research provided essential insight into the critical systemic factors governing audio material dissemination within the Ukrainian context. V. Volkomor (2020) contributed an examination of the technological and institutional factors influencing the distribution of sound recording materials across the broader world audio space, thus offering a crucial comparative lens. Meanwhile, the study by L. Prykhodko (2019) addressed the institutional and economic factors that impacted the release and circulation of audio content, particularly within the context of the transitional period at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Collectively, these reviewed papers established the necessary detailed historical context and robust analytical frameworks for improving the comprehensive analysis of sound recording material dissemination at the convergence of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

In addition, the research was focused on the rapid shifts in digital music culture over the period from 2020 to 2025. R. Melnyk *et al.* (2025) examined the impact of digital transformation on cultural heritage management, specifically highlighting the challenges associated with the digitisation and preservation of historical Ukrainian sound recordings, which underpinned the methodological complexity of the modern cross-format comparison. S. Qu *et al.* (2021) examined how Chinese music streaming platforms had reshaped the pathways for independent, self-releasing musicians, offering new visibility and distribution options, while simultaneously creating deeper dependencies on platform infrastructures. The researchers argued that this shift produced a hybrid model, in which platforms partially replaced traditional labels but also intensified data-driven commodification of artists' work. Overall, the study provided a nuanced view of how digital platforms transform creative labour, empowerment, and control in contemporary music markets. Researcher O. Kharchenko *et al.* (2021) addressed the legal and economic landscape, specifically analysing the challenges of intellectual property rights enforcement in the Ukrainian digital audio market, a factor that profoundly influenced the commercial release volume and distribution strategy of discographic products. I. Kryvoruchko & M. Kovtanyuk (2024) explored the significant role of social media and online databases in the discovery and consumption of Ukrainian ethno-music and folklore, demonstrating how digital platforms were fundamentally altering cultural preservation and audience access, thereby affecting the perceived volume and reach of sound recordings. The resulting panoramic overview of Ukrainian musical discography, integrating regional and diachronic analyses with a graphical model of its quantitative development and artistic characteristics, established the study's scientific originality. The purpose of the study was to trace and describe the transformation of discography in the context of Ukrainian phonographic culture over the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

## Materials and Methods

The research methodology consisted in the development of audio recording products in Ukraine was investigated across two pivotal periods: the Soviet era (from 1922 to 1991) and the period following the restoration of Ukrainian Independence (from 1991 to 2025). The main scientific provisions were established through the application of several methods. Verification was used to substantiate statements regarding the evolution of audiovisual culture at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries. System analysis was based on a database of statistical information concerning the quantity of releases on various media formats. This data was compiled from open source discographical databases, primarily Discogs (n.d.), official catalogue from the state-owned Melodiya record label. The comparative method was applied to the process of comparing Ukrainian audio works for similarity to the music industries of America and Europe between the 2000s and 2022. Key case studies included seminal albums and tracks from influential Ukrainian artists such as Okean Elzy ("Model"), Vopli Vidopliassova ("Den Narodzhennia"), and Ruslana ("Wild Dances"). The canonical status of these works within Ukrainian popular music was underpinned by their strategic blend of indigenous cultural motifs and global sonic trends. The method of generalisation involved synthesising conclusions from previous studies that correlate with contemporary standards of musical work distribution. Due to this methodological basis, the main vector of the research was to determine the quantity and quality of the release of discographic material and to catalogue it at state and private institutions, in particular culture and art (with the involvement of collection editions). With the adoption of the Law of Ukraine No. 2704-VIII (2019) and the Law of Ukraine No. 2849-IX (2022), strategic changes have taken place not only in the restoration of lost or damaged discographic products, but also in the use of folklore sources in the symmetry of modifying Ukrainian-language songs in other genres: jazz, pop, and rock cultures. In addition, it was important to analyse the Law of Ukraine No. 1227-VII (2014), which defined the principles of public media operations, including television and radio, and ensured state guarantees for the provision of broadcasting channels. As a result of perturbations, the future experimental strategy of the fields of cultural studies and art history was supplemented, enriched, and modernised by factual trends towards the emergence of young theorists and scholars, who used their own practical experiences in scientific research.

## Results and Discussion

The creation of a comprehensive database of Ukrainian discography from 1897 to 2025 was a difficult but important task of preserving and developing the cultural heritage and musicological science. Such a resource would allow researchers, musicians, historians, and the public to get access to a huge amount of information about the

Ukrainian audiovisual segment. Upon examining the successful segmentation of Ukrainian audio culture during the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, a number of critical issues, partially acknowledged by coordinating state and commercial cultural bodies, had emerged, necessitating action in three key areas: the creation of conditions to enhance the development and support of young musicians' creativity; the strengthening of copyright protection and the prevention of intellectual property violations by pirated content in accordance with Ukrainian legislation; and the proactive pursuit of integration with the European musical space through the involvement of academic institutions and participation in international musical projects, with the recognising entities including but not limited to, the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine and Collective Management Organisations. Sound recording and discography of Ukrainian culture after 1991 is a multi-level and multifaceted phenomenon. Despite all the difficulties, Ukrainian music was actively progressing and occupied its proper place among the models of world show business.

Analysis of music scenes across various regions of Ukraine, together with observations on how socio-political dynamics influence the audio industry, reveals both shared tendencies and clear distinctions between Ukraine's show business sphere and that of the United States and Europe. However, the outcome underscored that evaluating musical genres was inherently subjective, shaped by the viewpoints of listeners, art experts, and specialists in the commercial market. Another issue was the change of musical tastes, which complicated the conduct of a long-term study. The greatest difficulty was the normalisation of the discographic database, which was characterised by the disparity of sources, because information about audio recordings was scattered in archives, libraries, private collections, which do not belong to scientists and researchers. Another guarantee was the lack of a unified system of classification of musical recordings, which also complicated the systematisation of the database. The preservation and digitisation of analogue recordings presented considerable challenges, requiring both budgetary investment and specialised equipment that was not consistently accessible. It was necessary to establish a legal framework for identifying copyright, which typically remained valid for 50 to 100 years, for those phonographic materials that constituted a vital part of Ukraine's cultural heritage. A number of proposals had been put forward, focusing on the structuring of a specific database, it was suggested that this document should include the following information: 1) the name of the performer and composer; 2) the title of the work (genre, style, date of creation); 3) the place of recording and the company; 4) the format (gramophone record, reel, cassette, compact disc or digital recording); 5) the publisher or distributor; 6) an abstract, review, overview of the discographic product from leading artists and/or scientists-researchers in the field of culture and art (Witt, 2016).

Analysing phonographic data created in different regional studios of Ukraine, it is possible to identify interesting patterns and trends that reflected the cultural, social, and historical features of each region. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the continuation of professional thoughts and the implementation of the productivity of the development of discographic material became available in the scientific treatises of most Ukrainian researchers, in particular, A. Vasylk & V. Pylypovych (2015), who provided more complete summary information about the release and distribution of sound recordings. The Ukrainian discographic culture had gone through a rather long period of its historical formation, although at 2025 this field of science was considered quite young and had many disharmonious and unbalanced actions in a few studies by scientists and practitioners. The main explorer-collector, who had brought a vast amount of information to the cataloguing of works of the national discography was A. Zheleznyi (1989). The researcher analysed the collected data on records released during the Soviet Union. It was worth noting that the researcher was not a professional scientist, and his publications were dedicated to collection compilations. A. Zheleznyi's (1981) publication was a catalogue of all preserved, fixed, and restored works from the time of the Ukrainian SSR. The author noted those artefacts of printed materials (collections) that required factual refinement and supplementation in the section of discographic data.

From 1922 to 1991, Ukrainian music as a holistic artistic phenomenon was limited in its accessibility to a wide range of consumers. The main problem was the historical specifics of regionalisation, particularly the territories of Ukraine becoming part of the Soviet Union. However, masters of the national culture did not abandon their self-identity and artistic self-expression. For the Communist Party's executive bodies, the main reason for banning Ukrainian creativity was the desire to silence the praise of the human aspiration for freedom – both individual and national, the expression of artists' naive belief in equal rights for all peoples of the union of republics (which was declared, but not true), and the emphasis on the linguistic aspect and their own traditional education (Poshedin & Kashchuk, 2023). And this became an "eye sore" for the cultural leaders in factual decisions within the Soviet (russian-language) audio art. Some of the achievements fixed on phonographic devices were destroyed by the authorities themselves, some copies fell under sanctions and were banned from use, while others were put away in drawers, waiting for better times that would bring a more loyal attitude towards Ukraine, or "untie the hands" of artists in their expressions of patriotism and love for the people, language, and Motherland. Exploring the phonographic heritage of the Western, Central, Southern, and Eastern regions of Ukraine more deeply, a considerable stylistic difference in the music can be seen. These factors were evidenced by audio models on reels, cassettes, and records, and

from the 1990s – by disc devices (players, tape recorders) that entered the market in connection with the expansion of the digitalisation of the multimedia image (CD and DVD). In the early 2000s, the emergence of digital (localised accessibility) computer products, already contained in internet databases, transferred from mechanical audio carriers.

The Ukrainian diaspora had fundamentally shaped the trajectory of Ukrainian musical culture globally, utilising discography as a critical medium for both preservation and evolution. Beginning with the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, successive waves of emigration introduced and recorded foundational Ukrainian folk and choral traditions, establishing a crucial historical archive abroad, particularly in North America. This initial preservation effort was later enhanced by an influx of professionally trained artists, who cultivated Ukrainian academic music. The diaspora's musical output shifted toward synthesis, dynamically integrating traditional melodies and instrumentation into contemporary Western genres such as pop, rock, and world music. This hybrid approach had allowed the discography to function not only as a cultural anchor for the community but also as a powerful tool for promoting and contemporising Ukrainian heritage on the global stage. The Gramophone and Syrena-Electro companies were pivotal recording entities that played a crucial role in documenting and disseminating Ukrainian music, particularly during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Gramophone company, established in the UK in 1898 and swiftly becoming a global enterprise, undertook significant recording expeditions across the Russian Empire and Eastern Europe in the early 1900s, capturing a wide array of ethnic and regional music. Its discography included valuable classical recordings, such as the 1910 Stockholm sessions of the renowned Ukrainian tenor Modest Mentsynsky, which featured 22 Ukrainian folk and original songs (Maksymiuk, 2003). Concurrently, Syrena-Electro (initially Ideal in 1904, renamed Syrena Rekord in 1908, and later referred to as Syrena-Electro), a major Polish company based in Warsaw, was instrumental in recording Ukrainian folk music for the substantial markets of the Russian Empire and, later, interwar Poland (Lerski & Karński, 2004). Syrena-Electro's output included the work of Ukrainian artists in Warsaw, and field recordings conducted in regions like Halychyna and Zakarpattia. Notably, the company issued recordings of the celebrated bandurist Mykhaylo Teliga in 1934 and, throughout the 1930s, produced approximately 73 Ukrainian recordings, including 26 tracks by the Lviv choir Surma (Fedorniak, 2020). Both firms, through their respective commercial operations, were essential in creating a foundational audio archive of Ukrainian musical heritage prior to World War 2 (1939-1945), a resource of immense value for subsequent ethnomusicological and historical studies.

Another important aspect of the study was to identify Ukrainian-language discographic material released in

the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries and compare the number of works in different decades, the emergence of new performers, and the mechanisms of sound recording (their differences or inheritance by the culture of digitalisation in the early 2000s from previous devices: sound programmes, tape recorders, components for storing and recording sound space). A follower of A. Zheleznyi's actions was the famous researcher and collector of Ukrainian sound recordings, S. Maksymiuk (2003). The researcher's experiments were dedicated to Ukrainian music but had contradictions and differences with the information of A. Zheleznyi, which indicated that the author focused on the catalogues of sound recording products of immigrants. The specialist adjusted his focus to the recording companies of European countries (Austria, Germany, Poland, Czech Republic, France) and researched a certain cataloguing of Ukrainian works of discographic materials up to the 2000s. The researcher's main vector of scientific practices was oriented not only on the recordings of solo, individual artists but also of collectives, symphony orchestras, folk groups and ensembles of an academic direction. Thus, it was divided by types and styles of musical performance, so the main vector of audio recording culture required not a general overview of the established audio distribution but by certain areas: folk music, academic art, jazz, popular song and the rock industry. The least studied link of audio recording was rock art, as the periodisation of the establishment of the effective concepts of this genre was characterised by the limited use of fixed resources and the number of listeners. The most optimal source of contemporary treatises had become popular art, which had used all the standardised concepts of the development of the show business industry. Neutral actions regarding the involvement of scientific and practical apparatuses in the formulation of the release of discographic material belong to such genres as folklore and academic music. And the jazz was a manifestation of improvisational creativity, which was mostly formed at the expense of a concert performance, had a limited number of discographic collections (Daiuk & Dmytrak, 2018).

The priority significance of Kyiv as the primary Ukrainian centre must be emphasised, as it had functioned as the "mastodon" of the nation's musical life, being the exclusive location for the construction of the largest recording studios – such as the Kyiv Branch of the All-Union Melodiya Recording Studio – and attracting the most distinguished musicians and composers. A divergent characteristic was evident among the Western Ukrainian regions like Lviv and Chernivtsi, which maintained distinct cultural traditions reflected in local works and were supported by institutions such as Lviv Radio House Recording Studios. The port city of Odesa remained open to new musical influences and contributed to diverse genre development, often utilising the sound infrastructure of facilities like the Odesa Film Studio

Sound Department; and Kharkiv, acting as an industrial platform, also possessed a developed musical culture and served as a recording site for numerous Ukrainian songs, frequently leveraging the resources of Kharkiv Radio Committee (Radio House) Studios. However, a deep regional differentiation in genre subcategories was observed, wherein Western Ukraine was characterised primarily by recordings of folk, academic, and sacred music,

Central Ukraine by academic art and popular song, Eastern Ukraine by Cossack song, ethnomusic, romances/solo songs, and chanson (a fringe subgenre of song), and Southern Ukraine by pop art, chanson, and folklore. This analysis can be informed by the extensive databases on the distribution of multimedia materials, which had been formed by numerous commercial recording companies and institutions (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Distribution of musical genres in the show business market

Genre category	Allocated market share
Popular “pop” culture	Over 50%
Academic direction	Up to 20% (Shared)
Folklore direction	Up to 20% (Shared)
Rock art	Less than 10%
Jazz	Up to 5%
Subcultures (Electronic music, DJ, Alternative art)	Remaining 15%

Source: based on L. Vasylieva (2004)

However, regarding the breadth of the relevance of the submitted information, all percentage ratios may vary slightly, depending on the years and the relevance of this style and musical product, one must consider the age category. The proportionality of listening and the percentage ratio relative to the number of listeners interested in specific musical genres was determined. O. Naidiuk (2019) collected the information on various network (multimedia platforms: Deezer, Spotify, YouTube, Facebook), in particular, available to the Ukrainian

consumer: American and European vocal and instrumental works cover over 60% of listeners, up to 30% was occupied by Ukrainian music, and 10% was allocated to listening to works of different countries of Asia, Australia and Africa, in particular, russia-language content compositions got here. The differentiation between the criteria of style and genre yields distinct interpretive implications and analytical possibilities, the distribution of which was posited to vary across age categories and was quantifiable through the following percentage ratio (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Musical genre preferences by age category

Age category	Alternative music	Rock	Popular (Pop)	Folk/Academic	Jazz	Other musical styles
Up to 18 years	Over 40%	20%	20%	10%	Less than 5%	Up to 5-6%
From 18 to 35 years	25%	30%	35%	5%	3%	2%
From 35 to 50 years	3%	10%	50%	30%	6%	1%
From 50 and above	2% (Combined with rock)	2% (Combined with alternative)	25%	Over 40%	8%	25% (Chanson, 70s-90s songs)

Source: Rating Group (2019)

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, large-scale transformations in musical preferences had been observed, revealing significant diachronic shifts in cultural tastes and modes of music consumption. Unlike trends characteristic of specific age groups during the 1990s and 2000s, the results indicated a gradual yet profound transition in the structure of musical preferences – from locally oriented and genre-stable systems to globalised, dynamic, and hybrid forms of musical perception. In 1991-2025 period, priority was given to new models of musical culture (genres, styles, technologies, synthetic sounds, elements of voice processing). In the early 1900s-1950s, music was dominated by: folklore, classical and religious/sacred stylistic orientation; from 1950 to the 1990s, compounds of jazz, pop (otherwise – pop

culture) and dance genres were actively appearing with the use of electromusical instruments (Cherevko, 2012). At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the musical art of the world audiovisual space modified the categories of pop, forming new types of culture such as rock, hip-hop, electronic composition. However, the generation of such achievements was quite monotonous, and thus required the expansion of popularisation among the young artists themselves. The revival of interest in traditional musical folklore was observed in its penetration into the arena of world show business, which contributed to the globalisation of folk motifs in various musical cultures.

It should be emphasised that the percentage ratios presented in Table 2 change over time, as the share of new audio material grows, which listeners can evaluate

from a positive, neutral, and/or negative standpoint. O. Hrebin *et al.* (2023) emphasised that existing state and private archives (the Central State Audiovisual and Electronic Archive, recordings of Ukrainian regional and local television and radio industries, the H. Pshenychnyi Central State Cine Photo Phono Archive of Ukraine, the former Kyiv branch of the All-Union State Enterprise Melodiya, and the problem-research Laboratory of Musical Ethnology at the M. Lysenko Lviv National Music Academy, the Laboratory of Ethnomusicology at the P. Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine, the Educational Laboratory of Folklore at the I. Kotlyarevsky Kharkiv National University of Arts, the phonographic laboratory of the M. Rylsky Institute of Art Studies, Folklore and Ethnology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, and private collections) required systematisation of the distribution of analysis by regional location, as well as the maintenance of statistical data to ensure wide access to culturologists and art historians. However, the insufficient indexing and processing of these archives complicated the conduct of a comprehensive analysis of the history and development of Ukrainian discographic and sound recording music. O. Hrebin *et al.* (2023) sought to fill this gap by exploring various genres of Ukrainian culture: from academic to popular, using available archival phono funds.

In a specific examination of the historical development of regional musical centres, it must be noted that each individual district of Ukraine possessed its own audio distribution infrastructure. This infrastructure comprised both state-funded complexes (e.g., state, regional, and district recording studios) and commercial, private enterprises, where phonographic works were produced. The largest territories of such new formations were Kyiv, Kharkiv, Lviv, Chernivtsi, Odesa, Dnipro, Poltava, and Chernihiv, which influenced the development of the integration of musical instruments and the modification of unique performance styles. An important campus in the revival of the festival life of Ukraine were satellite cities that were followers of industrial provinces and contributed to the popularisation of local culture and the exchange of experience between musicians (Bucha, Kyiv Oblast; Vyzhnytsia, Chernivtsi Oblast; Nizhyn, Chernihiv Oblast; Truskavets, Lviv Oblast).

During 1922-1991, a large-scale complex of discographic material was created in Ukraine, which covered a wide range of genre and stylistic characteristics. It was difficult to name the quantitative component of phonography due to the lack of centralised accounting and the partial loss of archival sources. However, it was possible to single out the main directions and the most famous artists, who contributed to the Ukrainian sound recording, in particular: mass culture (performers: I. Bobul, V. Zinkevych, V. Ivasyuk, N. Matvienko, Trio Marenich, M. Mozgovyi, S. Rotaru, N. Yaremchuk). The subordinate genre and stylistic forms prevalent during this period included the popular song (with representative performers

such as S. Rotaru and N. Yaremchuk), rock art (operating within Soviet censorship limits, exemplified by groups like "Vopli Vidopliassova" (VV) and "Braty Hadiukiny"), and author's/bard's creativity (text-centric music with artists such as Viktor Morozov). In the field of folk music, ensembles and choral groups received a special status, which were later awarded state prizes from the leadership of Ukraine, in particular: the Hryhoriy Veriovka National Honoured Academic Folk Choir of Ukraine, the Pavlo Virsky State Honoured Academic Dance Ensemble of Ukraine, the Stanislav Pavlyuchenko Ukrainian Folk Choir; thanks to which, such performers as D. Hnatyuk and A. Solovianenko were noted. Regarding the popularisation of phonographic materials of classical music, it is worth attributing the Kyiv Chamber Orchestra, the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine, which introduced into the composer's discourse the works of M. Lysenko, B. Liatoshynsky, L. Revutsky, V. Sylvestrov, M. Skoryk, Ye. Stankovych. From 1922 to 1991, music, like other types of literature and art, was subject to censorship, so many works could not be recorded or distributed. Most of the products were published with the permission of the decisions of the artistic council of the All-Union State Enterprise of Recording Melodiya (the Kyiv branch of this company was specially established). A significant part of Ukrainian songs was published there and "generously sprinkled" with Russian samples. Among other things, many recordings were lost, destroyed, and/or damaged.

The prevailing release of discographic products was subject to the control of several firms and companies established following the distribution and integration of audio recording material into the American and European markets. These entities, post-2000, formalised procedures for the popularisation of multimedia data, defining their activities in the show business market primarily as distribution. Starting from the period of 2003-2004, the Ukrainian media market had actively pursued integration into European professional activities. Numerous producer centres – which govern professional, including commercial, show business – had been entering into contracts and civil law agreements with international media labels such as Lavina Music, Sony Music Entertainment, and Believe Digital. Beyond distribution, Ukrainian producer agencies, often subsidised by recording companies that covered a significant segment of popularisation costs (Sbitniewa, 2022), shaped the professional trajectory of the artist. However, cooperation with American- and world-focused audio space colleagues was not universally satisfactory, leading to the creation of indigenous label organisations and distribution factories within Ukrainian show business. Private corporations, founded since 2003 – including Mamamusic, Talant Records, Mozgi Group (now MOZGI Entertainment), and TatoMusic – introduced mechanisms to align artistic activity with American legislative norms and contemporary European-adapted profile systems for audio recording

development. MOZGI Entertainment and TatoMusic remained operating corporations in 2025, while Mamamusic and Talant Records, had either modified their profiling, gone bankrupt, or established new industrial-multimedia centres to expand the operational capability of market relations between the performer and the consumer. The stock market for the approbation of multimedia products was undergoing rapid transformation and redistribution provoked by the principles and concepts inherent in European mass media standards, which were often outlined in directives and regulations such as Directive (EU) No. 2018/1808 (2018) and the principles established by the European Broadcasting Union, though specific official documents detailing "European mass media standards" as a singular, unified code for music distribution were complex and generally derived from a body of EU law governing digital services and copyright protection (Directive (EU) No. 2019/790, 2019).

In 1991 new horizons opened for the development of the national musical culture, which were evidenced using computer music technologies and the contemporary trends of the scientific and technical revolution of the late 20<sup>th</sup>-early 21<sup>st</sup> century. These perturbations were followed by changes in the political and economic environment, modernised components for creativity and popularisation of music, in particular, its recording and distribution. However, in parallel with the rise of artificiality, the Ukrainian music industry was shaken by a few challenges associated with the transition to market relations and the globalisation of cultural trends (Uzhynskyi, 2021). The main trends in the development of discography were focused on the structure of the Ukrainian "pop", which was composed of new names (artists, performers, composers) and inherited American European musical styles. Simultaneously, the functioning of the national audiovisual industry was growing new recording companies, labels were being formed, and the festival culture was being founded. Thus, the demand for the commercialisation of show business was growing rapidly and was displacing state creative institutions as a segment of competitiveness among market relations in art. Thus, there was a technological integration of the culture of Ukraine into the world musical space, which was distinguished by the beginning of active work with foreign colleagues, and participation in international competitions, festivals, and exhibitions (for example: the Eurovision Song Contest).

The strategic institutional shifts following in 1991 had influenced the nation's cultural and discographic landscape. The adoption of the Constitution of Ukraine (1996) and several key legislative acts has driven substantial changes in the media and language policy sphere. These acts include the Law of Ukraine No. 1227-VII (2014), the Law of Ukraine No. 2704-VIII (2019), and the Law of Ukraine No. 2849-IX (2022). These developments extended beyond the restoration of damaged discographic products to encompass fundamental

shifts in the creative sphere, particularly promoting the use of folklore sources as a foundation for modifying and expanding Ukrainian-language songs within diverse genres, specifically jazz, pop, and rock cultures. The heritage of the discography of Ukrainian culture, recorded by various sound recording devices in the period of the 20<sup>th</sup>-early 21<sup>st</sup> century, was extremely diverse and reflected all the complex processes that took place in society. It was worth emphasising that since 1995, due to the art agency Territory-A, the revival of the national idea was initiated, where most Ukrainian performers began to transform "pop" works with folklore roots (groups Aqua Vita, VV, Okean Elzy, TNMK, singer Ruslana) (Mazur, 2021). Okean Elzy's album, *Model* (2001), stood as a pivotal transitional work, integrating the lyrical sincerity of post-Soviet rock with an innovative sonic palette that fused 1970s hard rock, Oriental melodies, and contemporary electronic textures, thus expanding the perceived aesthetic boundaries of mainstream Ukrainian rock. Concurrently, Vopli Vidopliassova, a foundational band in Ukrainian rock-n-roll and neo-ethnic rock, employed their seminal track *Den Narodzhennia* as an early example of their influential style, which synthesised folk and punk sensibilities, gaining cross-cultural visibility through its inclusion in key post-Soviet cinema (Discogs, n.d.). Ruslana's Eurovision-winning entry *Wild Dances* (2004) represented a landmark achievement in Ukrainian cultural diplomacy, successfully operationalising an Ethnic Pop Banger genre by merging traditional Hutsul rhythms and choreography with contemporary pop and rock production, thereby projecting a distinct national identity onto an international stage and countering colonial cultural narratives.

In 2000s new performance practices appeared which reflected changes within the industrialisation of show business, by methods of technological solutions and software applications, where quite a lot of compositional sound solutions were built in. Due to their own self-identification of culture, Ukrainian musicians began to actively cooperate with the foreign segment of listeners, which contributed to the popularisation of author's music outside Ukraine. In parallel with these actions, designers and technologists tried to model the digital transformation of the audio industry, to create large multimedia archives that would allow preserving and popularising the musical heritage. The proliferation of European streaming platforms, exemplified by services such as Spotify and Deezer, had presented novel opportunities for the international promotion of Ukrainian culture and coincided with the cessation of certain state-funded projects, such as the previously supported National Digital Content Application Initiative (an illustrative example of a grant-based programme), which were focused on the development of Ukrainian audiovisual applications. R. Bezugla (2010) noted that the most creative and scientific specialists considered it necessary to create multimedia sites, where all available phonographic materials

of the author's song from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to 2010 was stored. However, other obstacles arose, which were the result of insufficient information data in the identification of discographic materials, particularly the lack of systematised sources about music production in different regions of Ukraine.

In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the level of the digital revolution was growing, which activated the development of multimedia technologies, which led to the emergence of new audio recording formats and ways of their distribution (first on physical media, then – digital, and after 2006 – virtual). In Ukrainian music, new genre cultures had appeared: hip-hop, rap, electronic music, the Looping strategy. However, the digitalisation of the culture of the 2000s-2010s was shaken by the main technical and performance challenges, which allowed the distribution of audiovisual products by illegal methods, which reduced the profits in the show business market. Problems of a revolutionary nature and a decrease in the quality of life in the system of the Ukrainian economy led to a reduction in investment in the music industry; lack of state support for the music infrastructure complicated the development of the digital industry. S. Lazarev (2018) emphasised that the potential avenues for the retrieval of audiovisual information included several key categories: archival funds (such as the National Phonotheque of Ukraine, scientific and creative institutions, state and regional repositories, and collected archives of radio and television channels); libraries (encompassing music, university, and music academy collections); audio labels (both Ukrainian and foreign entities that collaborated with Ukrainian artists); private collections (specifically the systematic search of archival sound recording sources held by collectors); and Internet sources (including specialised databases and social networks). For a comprehensive comparative analysis, it was necessary to collect available data on musical recordings created in different regions of Ukraine, considering the special configurations of the historical features of the regions (music schools, traditions, the influence of other cultures), social and economic factors (the level of development of the audiovisual industry and their accessibility), political reforms. The definition of the regional features of Ukrainian culture will be normalised due to the research of specific genres, styles, themes that were characteristic of these areas. This parallel was identified based on cultural centres (cities, towns, hamlets) that had played key transformations among the historiography of the Ukrainian discography and sound recording. Nowadays, the creation of a database of Ukrainian discography is a complex and controversial process, mostly because of commercial planning, an extremely necessary task for the preservation of the artistic heritage of Ukraine and the development of cultural studies.

## Conclusions

The research had established periodisation of Ukrainian musical discography, revealing distinct quantitative and qualitative characteristics for each historical stage. The analysis of statistical data confirmed that the initial formation of the discography at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was driven by foreign record labels, resulting in a limited but culturally significant number of releases. The post-1991 era initiated a radical transformation, marked by the collapse of the state-run industry, a sharp decline in the production of physical media like vinyl and CDs, and the subsequent rise of digital distribution. Within the show business market, pop culture was allocated over 50% of the market share. Conversely, academic and folklore directions each comprise up to 20% (shared), rock art accounts for less than 10%, and jazz takes up to 5%. Additionally, in the multimedia platforms available to the Ukrainian consumer, American and European vocal and instrumental works covered over 60% of listeners, Ukrainian music occupied up to 30%, and 10% was allocated to listening to works of different countries, including Russian-language content compositions.

The 1960s witnessed Ukrainian SSR established monopoly under the Melodiya label, which resulted in peak vinyl production. This rise in output coincided with ideological homogenisation and a marked regional disparity, as Kyiv remained the principal centre of sound recording. The study also emphasised the essential contribution of the Ukrainian diaspora, whose recording activities throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century helped to preserve national musical heritage beyond the constraints of the Soviet system. Comparative analysis revealed that although Ukraine began to adopt Western production standards in the 2000s, its industry continued to differ in scale and infrastructural development. Future research should prioritise deeper examinations of regional discographies, the evolution of genre representation across different historical periods, and the creation of a unified national digital database capable of consolidating the various elements of Ukraine's phonographic legacy.

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## Музична дискоографія ХХ – початку ХХІ століття в Україні: історико-еволюційний та регіональний виміри

**Анотація.** Актуальність дослідження зумовлена необхідністю систематизації історії української музичної дискоографії як невід'ємної складової національної культурної спадщини, що перебувала під загрозою фізичної та цифрової втрати. Метою дослідження було проаналізувати історичні, еволюційні та регіональні виміри розвитку української музичної дискоографії з кінця ХХ – початку ХХІ століття. Розкрито складний процес розвитку української індустрії звукозапису. Початковий етап характеризувався діяльністю іноземних фірм грамзапису, насамперед Gramophone та Syrena-Electro. Період 1922-1991 років відзначався централізацією та монополізацією звукозаписної галузі. Кульмінацією цієї доби стало створення київської філії компанії «Мелодія», яка перетворилася на головну платформу з виробництва українських платівок. Київський будинок звукозапису сформувався як ключова інституція, що виконувала роль технологічного та творчого центру запису провідних українських академічних та популярних виконавців. Період 1991-2025 років визначався децентралізацією ринку, що зумовило стрімке виникнення приватних студій. Ця доба засвідчила фундаментальний перехід від аналогових носіїв, зокрема вінілових платівок, до цифрових форматів – компакт-дисків і стрімінгових платформ. Така трансформація докорінно змінила принципи виробництва, розповсюдження та споживання музики. Виявлено, що протягом ХХ століття українська діаспора активно здійснювала звукозапис і поширення української музики за кордоном, фактично зберігаючи ті пласти культурної спадщини, які в СРСР зазнавали цензурних обмежень. Основними викликами у збереженні цієї спадщини визначено фізичну деградацію аналогових носіїв та нагальну потребу в системній цифровізації та науковому каталогуванні розпорошених архівів. Практичне значення дослідження полягає у формуванні наукового підґрунтя для розроблення національної стратегії збереження та популяризації української аудіоспадщини, зокрема концептуалізації спеціалізованого Музею звукозапису

**Ключові слова:** аудіомистецтво; звукозапис; фольклор; популярна музика; механічний звукозапис; цифровий звукозапис; електромузичні інструменти

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## Differences between acting and public speaking: Psychological and communicative aspects of interacting with an audience

**Abstract.** The digitalisation of cultural space and the emergence of new formats of stage presence (online performances, streaming, interactive performances) require a rethinking of traditional approaches to interaction with the audience. The aim of the study was to identify the differences between acting and public speaking in order to improve the training of future actors. The study revealed fundamental differences between acting and public speaking in the context of interaction with the audience. It was established that an actor created artistic reality through psychophysical transformation into a character, working within the “fourth wall” system, while an orator conveyed their own position through structured argumentation and direct communication with the audience. The specifics of working with text have been revealed: an actor fully assimilated the dramatic material and “exists” in the image of the character, while an orator memorised key points, leaving room for improvisation and flexible response to the audience. A difference in the use of voice and body has been established: the actor’s words were born from the character’s inner actions, and the plasticity was fixed in the mise-en-scène, while the orator consciously controlled their voice for impact, and gestures and movements were subordinated to the goal of effective communication. Differences in psychological mechanisms have been identified: the actor was in a state of double consciousness and developed empathy within the image, while the orator retained a holistic self-identification and directed emotional intelligence outward toward the audience. A typology of communicative situations has been developed based on four parameters: degree of conventionality, directionality, technological mediation, and temporal structure of communication. A system of six criteria for choosing interaction strategies has been substantiated: the goal of communication, identification of the performer, audience expectations, feedback opportunities, time constraints, and level of formality. It has been proven that the synthesis of acting and public speaking practices formed a universal performer-communicator capable of consciously choosing a strategy depending on the professional context. The proposed typology and system of criteria form the methodological basis for the development of integrated training programmes for performing arts specialists, combining acting and public speaking techniques for the effective adaptation of communicative behaviour to various situations in the modern cultural space

**Keywords:** actor; orator; communication strategies; psychological mechanisms; performing arts

### Introduction

In the contemporary performing arts space, there was a growing need to rethink the interaction between performers and audiences. The digitalisation of the cultural space required performers to have universal competencies and the ability to adapt their skills to various professional contexts, which made comparative research

into the differences between acting and public speaking skills practically significant. In the context of contemporary research on the psychological and communicative aspects of acting and public speaking, scholars have systematically analysed the impact of acting practice on psychosocial well-being and the effectiveness of interac-

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tion with the audience. Researcher G. Brott *et al.* (2025) demonstrated that regular acting activities contributed to the development of emotional self-regulation and stress resistance. Similar conclusions were confirmed by the study of L. Berkemeyer *et al.* (2025), who found that improvisational training significantly increased creative self-efficacy, confidence in one's professional abilities, and self-esteem, while reducing anxiety and promoting emotional regulation, which was important for both actors and speakers. However, improvisation was not the only factor that determined the effectiveness of an actor's communication: T. Stevenson *et al.* (2025) showed how the acoustic characteristics of the voice during the performance of emotionally charged roles form non-verbal signals that were important for the audience's perception of the scene. The study by A. Trofimov *et al.* (2021) broadened the understanding of the psychological nature of stage interaction by analysing the role of playback theatre as a form of dramatic activity that promoted the development of spontaneity, the ability to react instantly and creatively interpret situations, while emphasising the psychological aspect of empathic listening and the actor's ability to capture and reflect emotions in stage interaction.

In the study by R. Schmälzle *et al.* (2025), a "thin-slicing" technique was used to evaluate the effectiveness of public speaking, which made it possible to compare the communication strategies of actors and speakers. In addition, V. Jakkamsetti *et al.* (2023) proved that training in improvisational theatre increased behavioural plasticity and affected the rhythm and duration of continuous speech, which has become important for adapting communication strategies in different situations. In the Ukrainian scientific field, the issues of acting communication and the psychology of stage interaction were examined by M. Barnych & N. Horbachuk (2021), who analysed the process of creative transformation as the basis of stage action. M. Tatarenko (2022) noted that the key problem in theatrical art remained the improvement of acting skills to create an expressive and original stage image. The author emphasised that different acting styles – characterisation, mask, alienation, transformation – form the basis of the artistic and creative process and ensure the richness of stage forms. I. Lennik (2025) analysed the individual style of an actor as a communicative phenomenon. I. Kabanova (2024) noted that although online formats allowed for the development of individual technical and analytical competencies, it cannot completely replace the practice of acting partnership and audience contact. At the same time, experience working with studio students and university students has demonstrated the need to search for new models of distance learning that can compensate for the lack of a live theatre environment. Taken together, these studies have outlined the psychological and communicative aspects of stage interaction that were relevant for a comparative analysis of acting and public speaking skills.

The aim of the article was to identify the differences between acting skills and public speaking skills in order to develop a system for training specialists, who were able to effectively adapt their communicative behaviour to different professional contexts. To achieve this aim, the following objectives were set: 1) to conduct a comparative analysis of acting and public speaking skills in order to identify their differences; 2) to investigate the psychological mechanisms of interaction between the performer and the audience in acting and public speaking practices; 3) to determine the criteria for the communicative adaptation of the performer to different professional contexts and to develop a scientifically based model for selecting techniques for interacting with the audience. The novelty of the research was that for the first time a comprehensive system of criteria for the conscious choice of acting or public speaking techniques depending on the communicative context has been developed. The specifics of the psychological mechanisms underlying different types of interaction between the performer and the audience have been identified.

## Materials and Methods

The methodological basis of the study was an interdisciplinary approach that integrated the theatre studies aspect (analysis of stage craft, principles of transformation, work with image, specifics of existence in a role), the psychological aspect (study of the mechanisms of emotional intelligence, attention processes, concentration and psychological stability of the performer, the phenomenon of the actor's double consciousness) and the communicative aspect (the study of strategies for interacting with the audience, types of feedback, ways of establishing trust, mechanisms for maintaining attention). A systematic analysis of the concepts of classical theatre pedagogy (L. Kurbas, J. Grotowski, P. Brook) and contemporary communication researchers (D. Carnegie, S. Sinek, A. Cuddy) provided a theoretical justification for the identified patterns, in particular: the principle of the actor's double consciousness as opposed to the speaker's holistic self-identification; the difference in the mechanisms of building trust through artistic truth and through the demonstration of competence; the specifics of empathy directed inward toward the image in acting practice and empathy directed outward toward the audience in public speaking practice; differences in working with feedback from the audience.

The comparative method was used to compare acting skills and oratory skills according to the criteria of working with text (memorisation and transformation in acting versus memorisation of theses and improvisation in public speaking), use of voice and body (mis-en-scène fixation in an actor versus natural plasticity in an orator), and the nature of interaction with the audience (the "fourth wall" system in theatre versus direct dialogue in public speaking), which revealed fundamental differences in the target settings of both types of performers.

Psychological analysis of the mechanisms of interaction between the performer and the audience was used to reveal the specifics of emotional intelligence, feedback processes, mechanisms of attention and concentration in acting and public speaking. Typological modelling was used to systematise communicative situations based on four parameters: degree of conventionality, directionality, technological mediation, and temporal structure of communication. The structural-functional method was used to develop a system of criteria for selecting interaction strategies, which made it possible to identify six key parameters: the purpose of communication, performer identification, audience expectations, feedback opportunities, time constraints, and level of formality. The integration of theoretical and practical methods provided a comprehensive understanding of the differences between acting skills and public speaking in the context of the modern cultural space.

## Results and Discussion

Despite the growing need to introduce various communication practices in the training of performing arts specialists, there are a number of unresolved issues that require scientific consideration. One of them is the problem of distinguishing between competencies – future actors successfully transformed themselves on stage, but lost their persuasiveness during public performances, presentations of creative projects or communication with the media. This indicated an insufficient understanding of the nature of the differences between acting organically and speaking in a structured manner. The problem of methodological uncertainty was that existing methodologies often viewed acting and public speaking as parallel rather than intersecting systems, which made it difficult to create individual development strategies for each student. Actors needed to learn to find a balance between sincerity in their performance and the ability to communicate effectively with the audience. The problem of the psychological aspect was the lack of systematic research into the psychological mechanisms underlying different types of interaction with the audience. The problem of communicative adaptation was that modern performers needed a clear understanding of when to use acting techniques and when to use public speaking techniques. The lack of scientifically based criteria for such a choice led to communication failures and reduced professional effectiveness.

Given the problems identified, for the effective training of performing arts specialists, it is necessary to identify the fundamental difference in the goals of an actor and an orator. An actor creates an artistic reality in which he exists in the image of a role, while a orator conveys own position while remaining himself. This difference in the starting point determines all further differences in the technical arsenal and psychological mechanisms of work. In the context of working with text, there are fundamental differences between an actor and a orator. The

actor fully assimilates the dramatic material, memorising it and constructing each line within the framework of the artistic whole. In teaching practice, attention is drawn to the fact that the actor's words are formed as a result of the character's internal actions. The actor does not speak the text – he acts with words, and the voice becomes an instrument of this action. Intonation, tempo, and pauses arise organically from the psychophysical state of the character. Improvisation in acting usually occurs only when the actor forgets the text or is looking for a way to "save" the scene, with the exception of specially constructed improvisational forms of theatre. In contrast, the orator uses the voice consciously: he controls the volume, tempo and pauses to emphasise important points and hold attention. In public speaking, improvisation is a natural component, as the orator has much more freedom in his choice of words and can respond flexibly to the mood of the audience. In this regard, Y. Bekh *et al.* (2021) noted that working with text for an actor is a process of deep transformation, where each word acquires emotional and intonational form and expressiveness through movement and physicality. D. Gustianing *et al.* (2024) pointed out that the orator works with the text differently, as they do not memorise the speech word for word, but only remember the main points, leaving room for improvisation and lively responses to the audience. Their speech is based on a logical structure – introduction, main part, conclusion – but the manner of delivery remains natural and conversational. The speaker's intonation is calm, confident, focused on convincing the listener rather than creating an artistic image.

Embodiment manifests in fundamentally different ways in actors and orators. For the actor, physicality and movement are fixed within the *mise-en-scène* during rehearsals: gestures, gait, and posture are conceived by the director and determined by the demands of the role, while simultaneously reflecting the inner state of the stage character. The actor moves within the stage space according to the logic of stage action and interaction with partners. By contrast, the orator's physicality is natural and unforced, formed on the basis of bodily sensation. Gestures, movement, and posture are subordinated to the aim of effective communication: they emphasise meaning, structure space, and create a sense of confidence and authority in front of the audience. The nature of interaction with the audience is also different. A.A. Mehr *et al.* (2024) noted that an actor works within the "fourth wall" system – they are aware of the presence of the audience but do not engage in direct communication with them, maintaining the illusion of independent existence in the stage space. The orator, on the other hand, does not separate themselves from the audience but remains on the same level with them. The speech is constructed as a direct dialogue with listeners: eye contact is established, audience reactions are taken into account, and the communicative strategy is adjusted in response to feedback (Huang *et al.*, 2023). Feedback

processes therefore have a different nature. For example, an actor receives feedback through the audience's energetic response – laughter, silence, applause – but does not adjust their performance directly to this response, as this would disrupt the logic of the stage action. The orator, by contrast, actively works with feedback, instantly adapting the speech to audience responses. Examples may be changed if misunderstanding is detected, arguments strengthened in the face of resistance, or humour introduced to release tension. Such flexibility is not a violation of the speech structure, but rather a marker of oratorical mastery. The mechanisms of attention and concentration also function in a specific way. The actor divides his attention between several objects: his partner, the stage space, the inner life of the character, and the technical elements of the performance. The actor learns to shift their attention from focusing on themselves to encompassing the entire space naturally, without visible effort, creating the illusion of organic life on stage. The speaker's attention has a different structure. It is directed primarily at the audience, at controlling the flow of communication, at tracking their own plan for presenting the material. D. Carnegie & J.B. Esenwein (2007) emphasised the importance of the speaker's "distributed attention" – the ability to simultaneously monitor the reactions of different parts of the audience, noticing both the general mood of the room and the individual reactions of individual listeners. At the initial stage, speakers often "lose" their audience by immersing themselves in their own thoughts or the text of their speech, while experienced speakers constantly hold the audience's attention by creating a dialogue. Psychological resistance to stress is formed in both practices, but through different mechanisms. Actors learn to trust the process, let go of control, and allow themselves to be vulnerable on stage. The orator overcomes anxiety through the opposite mechanism – increasing control and confidence in their own competence. Amy Cuddy has proven in her research that even physical postures of confidence ("power posing") reduce cortisol levels and increase feelings of control (Kyivstar Business, 2024). Orators build psychological resilience through thorough preparation, knowledge of the material, and proficiency in presentation techniques. The better they know the subject, the less prone they are to destructive anxiety.

An analysis of pedagogical concepts for training performers demonstrates that Ukrainian and global theatre schools have accumulated significant experience that can serve as a foundation for integrating acting and oratory techniques. Les Kurbas, in his "Berezil" concept, developed the idea of the universal actor-creator capable of various forms of stage communication. His principle of transformational theatre involved not only psychological transformation but also the conscious construction of stage action, which resonates with the oratorical strategy of speech planning (Vitenchuk, 2025). Jerzy Grotowski, in his concept of "poor theatre", emphasised

the psychophysical training of the actor and the capacity for full control over voice and body. His method of "via negativa" – the removal of blocks and constraints – has proven productive for both acting and oratorical practice. Developing students' awareness of their own psychophysical processes is equally important for organic existence within a role and for convincing public speaking (Fruktova, 2011). Peter Brook substantiated the idea of "living theatre", in which the actor establishes direct energetic contact with the audience. This principle reveals a point of convergence between acting and oratorical practices, as both require the ability to create a live connection with the spectator or listener. Brook emphasised that genuine communication occurs not through technical perfection but through the presence of a sincere performer in the here and now (Donchenko & Yermukanova, 2022). The Ukrainian researcher N. Kornienko (2020), in her work on theatre pedagogy, developed the concept of the actor's emotional-imagery thinking, which presupposes a synthesis of rational analysis and intuitive lived experience. It is precisely this synthesis that can become a bridge between acting organicity and oratorical structure. An actor who understands the logic of communicative construction gains an additional tool for directing the audience's attention without losing artistic truthfulness.

Identifying points of convergence between acting and oratorical practices makes it possible to formulate principles of balance between artistic truth and communicative effectiveness. First is the principle of conscious organicity: students and professional actors must learn to distinguish situations that require the character's spontaneous reaction from those that demand structured argumentation of a personal position. Second is the principle of vocal adaptability: understanding that the voice may function both as an instrument of inner action and as a means of logical persuasion. Third is the principle of contextual physicality: the ability to change the nature of bodily expression depending on the communicative situation. In practical terms, this implies the development of training exercises that combine acting and oratorical techniques. For example, work on a monologue may include both the lived experience of a character's inner states in the spirit of Kurbas and the use of rhetorical devices to clearly articulate key theses.

An understanding of pedagogical concepts in acting and oratorical techniques necessitates the study of the psychological mechanisms underlying these practices, since it is the psychological nature of audience interaction that determines why the same techniques function differently in acting and oratorical contexts. The actor exists in a state of dual consciousness: simultaneously being oneself and the character, controlling performance while organically living each moment. Les Kurbas described this as a state of "transformation", in which the actor's consciousness splits into the creator of the image and the image itself. This psychological duality

requires specific inner settings: the actor must believe in the given circumstances and activate emotional memory (Vitenchuk, 2025). The orator, by contrast, remains in a state of coherent self-identification. The orator's psychological orientation is towards persuasion through the demonstration of competence, logical thinking, and emotional engagement with the topic. The orator consciously manages emotions: pathos may be employed to enhance impact, but emotions are always subordinated to the goal of conveying ideas and influencing the audience's position. Emotional intelligence operates differently in these practices. The actor develops empathy through the technique of the "magic if", asking: "What would I do if I were in the character's situation?" This empathy is directed inward towards the character and serves to create psychological credibility. The actor must be sensitive to the emotional states of the character and stage partners, responding to the most subtle changes in their behaviour (Melnyk, 2024). The orator also employs emotional intelligence, but directs it outward. The orator reads the audience's mood, influences it, tracks reactions, and notices moments of waning attention or heightened interest. Oratorical empathy is the ability to sense the audience's needs, anticipate questions, and find arguments that resonate with a particular group of listeners. In pedagogical practice, students should be taught to "feel" the audience: to recognise when to accelerate the tempo or pause, when to add emotional intensity, and when to shift to rational argumentation.

E.-J. Lee (2025) noted that the phenomenon of presence, which means the ability of the performer to be completely "here and now", creating a sense of authenticity and engagement, is of particular importance. Theatre pedagogy emphasises the importance of developing a special state of readiness for creativity, when the actor is as sensitive as possible to every moment of action. This state is achieved through systematic exercises in concentration, relaxation and the development of sensory sensitivity. For the orator, presence means the

ability to establish genuine contact with the audience, to experience oneself not merely as a source of information but as a participant in a shared process of understanding. Brené Brown demonstrates in her talks how a speaker's true presence emerges from a willingness to be sincere, to acknowledge uncertainty, and to share not only knowledge but also doubts. It is precisely this authenticity, rather than flawless technique, that creates a deep connection with the audience (TEDx Talks, 2010). Within the mechanisms of trust building, the actor builds trust in the stage reality through the presence of "life truth" on stage – when the viewer believes in what they see, even if it is a completely conventional theatrical form. The orator builds trust by demonstrating competence, honesty, and respect for the audience. Simon Sinek formulated the "golden circle" principle: people trust not because of "what" is done, but because of "why" – if an orator can convincingly explain their motivation, goal, and beliefs, they will gain much deeper trust from the audience than simply by demonstrating facts (The "Golden circle" model for..., 2023). Thus, understanding how the performer's psyche works during a performance allows not only technical improvement, but also the development of true mastery – the ability to consciously choose the right tools depending on the situation, audience, and communication goal. Modern performing arts professionals operate in a multi-dimensional communicative space, which requires the systematisation of various situations of interaction with the audience. The proposed typology based on four main parameters, each of which significantly influences the choice of communication strategy (Table 1). Understanding the typology of communicative situations, in which an actor functions necessitates the formulation of clear criteria by which the performer can choose an adequate strategy for interacting with the audience. These criteria should function as analytical tools that help to make informed decisions about the use of acting or public speaking techniques (Table 2).

**Table 1.** Typology of communicative situations

<b>Degree of conventionality of communication</b>	<p><b>Essence of the parameter:</b> determines the relationship between the artistic (role-playing) and real (authentic) nature of communication.</p> <p><b>Main poles:</b> high conventionality ↔ complete authenticity.</p> <p><b>Examples of communicative situations:</b> classical drama (high conventionality); documentary theatre, stand-up (mixed form); educational lecture, scientific report (complete authenticity).</p> <p><b>Key communicative challenges:</b> awareness of the role, balance between the stage image and one's own personality.</p> <p><b>Optimal strategies for the performer/communicator:</b> developing role reflection, the ability to transition from "acting" to "presence", training authenticity in public speaking</p>
<b>Directionality of communication</b>	<p><b>Essence of the parameter:</b> the nature of the interaction between the performer and the audience.</p> <p><b>Main poles:</b> unidirectional ↔ dialogical.</p> <p><b>Examples of communicative situations:</b> theatre performance (unidirectional); forum theatre, immersive performance (mixed); master class, training, discussion (dialogical).</p> <p><b>Key communication challenges:</b> maintaining attention, adapting to reactions, managing the dynamics of interaction.</p> <p><b>Optimal strategies for the performer/communicator:</b> developing flexibility, improvisation skills, active listening</p>

Table 1, Continued

Technological mediation	<p><b>Essence of the parameter:</b> the presence and type of technological mediation between the performer and the audience.</p> <p><b>Main poles:</b> direct (offline) ↔ digital (online).</p> <p><b>Examples of communication situations:</b> theatre, concert, live lecture (direct); television programme, podcast (technological); online course, stream, VR performance (digital).</p> <p><b>Key communication challenges:</b> loss of direct contact, technical limitations, fragmented attention.</p> <p><b>Optimal strategies for the performer/communicator:</b> mastering media language, working with the camera, visualising content, interactivity</p>
Temporal structure of communication	<p><b>Essence of the parameter:</b> temporal organisation of the communication event.</p> <p><b>Main poles:</b> one-time ↔ serial/long-term.</p> <p><b>Examples of communication situations:</b> speech, performance, presentation (one-time); TV show, podcast, lecture course (serial); educational course, creative project (long-term).</p> <p><b>Key communicative challenges:</b> managing attention and resources, shaping expectations, building trust.</p> <p><b>Optimal strategies for the performer/communicator:</b> building a narrative, presenting material in stages, maintaining audience interest</p>

Source: developed by the author

Table 2. Analysis of the communicative situation and criteria for choosing a strategy

Criterion	Description
Purpose of communication	The fundamental criterion is the dominant goal of the event. If the goal is aesthetic experience, artistic image, emotional catharsis → acting techniques. If the goal is to convey information, persuade, teach → public speaking techniques. It is possible to combine goals, but it is important to be clearly aware of the dominant goal
Identification of the performer	Degree of identification with the message: high identification (character speech) → acting techniques; authentic expert position → public speaking techniques. Practical recommendation: perform exercises for a smooth transition from role-playing to expert speech
Audience expectations	Understanding the audience's request: theatregoers expect aesthetics and empathy, conference participants expect specifics and applicability. A mismatch between strategy and expectations leads to dissonance
Feedback opportunities	The presence/nature of feedback determines the readiness for improvisation: limited feedback (classical performance, recording) → thorough preparation and "programmed" influence. Active feedback (training, stream) → flexibility, improvisation, techniques for dialogue
Time constraints	Strict time frames (conference, media interview) → clear structure, conciseness, priority of key messages. Flexible frameworks (master class, training) allow for deeper immersion, practical exercises, and gradual unfolding of material. In theatre – working with "stage time"
Level of formality	Degree of formality: highly formal contexts (defences, official ceremonies) → protocol, restraint; informal (creative meetings) → personal tone, humour, freedom of expression. Recommendation: find a balance and adapt intonation and manner of behaviour

Source: developed by the author

These criteria do not function in isolation, but create a multidimensional system for analysing communicative situations. The performer must consistently evaluate the situation according to each criterion, which allows to construct a complete picture of the performance. In teaching practice, the use of these criteria facilitates the analysis of real communicative situations – students learn not to mechanically apply a set of rules, but to consciously analyse the context and make informed decisions about the choice of communicative strategy. Thus, the integration of the typology of communicative situations and the system of criteria for choosing interaction strategies forms a comprehensive methodological basis for training modern performing arts professionals who are capable of flexible adaptation in various professional contexts.

## Conclusions

A comparative analysis of two types of performance activity allowed to formulate key differences at the level of target orientations: creating an aesthetic experience through image as opposed to conveying ideas through a personal position. This difference determined all further features of the technical arsenal and methods of communication with the audience. The study of psychological mechanisms showed that actors develop the ability to empathically immerse themselves in the inner world of a character using the technique of "magic if" and emotional memory. Orators develop skills of external empathy aimed at understanding the needs of listeners, anticipating their questions, and finding resonant arguments. Feedback processes also have the opposite nature: the audience's energetic reaction does not directly correct the actor's

performance, while for the orator, instant adaptation to the audience's reactions was a sign of professional skill.

The proposed four-component typology of communicative situations created an analytical toolkit for systematising various contexts of performing arts, from classical theatre performances to online broadcasts and interactive performances. The system of six criteria for choosing an interaction strategy functioned as a multi-dimensional decision-making matrix that helped performers consciously choose between acting and public speaking techniques depending on the specifics of the situation. An analysis of the pedagogical concepts of various theatre schools revealed points of contact between acting and public speaking practices, which made it possible to form principles of balance: conscious organicity, voice adaptability, and contextual plasticity. These principles will allow the development of training exercises that combine the emotional score of a role with the logical structure of argumentation. The results of the study proved that modern performing arts professionals

do not need to choose between acting and public speaking techniques, but rather develop the ability to integrate them flexibly. This has formed a new professional quality – communicative universality, which has become important in the context of the digitalisation of cultural space and the emergence of new formats of stage presence. A promising direction for further research is the development and testing of an integrated training programme for performing arts specialists, which systematises acting and public speaking techniques based on the proposed typology of communicative situations.

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## ● References

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# Відмінності акторської майстерності та ораторського мистецтва: психологічні та комунікативні аспекти взаємодії з аудиторією

**Анотація.** Цифровізація культурного простору та поява нових форматів сценічної присутності (онлайн-вистави, стримінг, інтерактивні вистави) вимагають переосмислення традиційних підходів до взаємодії з аудиторією. Метою дослідження стало визначення відмінностей між акторською майстерністю та ораторським мистецтвом для уdosконалення підготовки майбутніх акторів. Дослідження виявило фундаментальні відмінності між акторською майстерністю та ораторським мистецтвом у контексті взаємодії з аудиторією. Встановлено, що актор створює художню реальність через психофізичне перевтілення в образ, працюючи у системі «четвертої стіни», тоді як оратор транслює власну позицію через структуровану аргументацію та пряму комунікацію зі слухачами. Виявлено специфіку роботи з текстом: актор повністю засвоює драматургічний матеріал та «існує» в образі героя, натомість оратор запам'ятує ключові тези, залишаючи простір для імпровізації та гнучкого реагування на аудиторію. Встановлено різницю у використанні голосу та тіла: акторське слово народжується з внутрішньої дії персонажа, а пластика мізансценно зафіксована, тоді як оратор свідомо контролює голос для впливу, а жести та рухи підпорядковані меті ефективного комунікування. Виявлено відмінності у психологічних механізмах: актор перебуває у стані подвійної свідомості та розвиває емпатію всередину образу, натомість оратор зберігає цілісну самоідентифікацію та спрямовує емоційний інтелект назовні на аудиторію. Розроблено типологію комунікативних ситуацій на основі чотирьох параметрів: ступеня умовності, спрямованості, технологічного опосередкування та темпоральної структури комунікації. Обґрунтовано систему з шести критеріїв вибору стратегій взаємодії: мета комунікації, ідентифікація виконавця, очікування аудиторії, можливості зворотного зв'язку, часові обмеження та рівень формальності. Доведено, що синтез акторських та ораторських практик формує універсального виконавця-комунікатора, здатного усвідомлено обирати стратегію залежно від професійного контексту. Запропонована типологія та система критеріїв становлять методологічну основу для розробки інтегрованих навчальних програм підготовки фахівців сценічного мистецтва, які поєднують техніки акторської майстерності та ораторського мистецтва для ефективної адаптації комунікативної поведінки до різноманітних ситуацій сучасного культурного простору

**Ключові слова:** актор; оратор; комунікативні стратегії; психологічні механізми; сценічне мистецтво

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## Global experience of stage interpretations of "Macbeth"

**Abstract.** The specific features of directorial and acting interpretations of well-known theatrical productions of "Macbeth" served as an effective means of enriching artistic experience in the stage realisation of the tragedy by William Shakespeare. The aim of the study was to update materials from specialised literary and artistic sources regarding directorial and acting versions of W. Shakespeare's "Macbeth" and the artistic qualities of these productions. The research identified significant characteristics of stage interpretations of the tragedy. The specificity of marionette versions of "Macbeth" was outlined, particularly in relation to the roles of the witches and Lady Macduff. Attention was given to the directorial solution of the English actor D. Garrick, marked by the psychological depth of "Macbeth" and the grandeur of Lady Macbeth. The study highlighted the directorial techniques of stage interpretation employed by the Royal Theatre actor J.Ph. Kemble, aimed at mitigating Macbeth's guilt and excluding the actor-ghost from scenes involving him. Emphasis was placed on the experimental adaptation by the Royal Theatre actor R. Elliston for the Royal Circus, realised in the form of a pantomimic performance. The influence of a pronounced psychological dimension in the stage images of the characters was established in the production of the London actor W.C. Macready. The contribution of the creators of the most outstanding stage images of "Macbeth" in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century – S. Phelps, C. Kean, and H. Irving – was also identified. A gradual shift was outlined from psychological deviance, the defining feature of Shakespearean tragedy productions during the Romantic period of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, towards the modernist subjectivism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Characteristic features of the modernised "Macbeth" by B. Jackson were specified. The study established the causes of the crisis in Shakespearean interpretation and readings of the tragedy and detailed the positive qualities of the directorial work of G.B. Shaw at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, featuring L. Olivier and V. Leigh. The perspective of a modernised interpretation of the great tragedy by P. Boháč and his experimental theatre company Spiritfire Company was traced. The research also clarified the aims of innovation and the methods of realisation of one of the most enigmatic interpretations of the tragedy by the director of the "Berezil" artistic association, L. Kurbas. The practical significance of the study lies in the acquisition of progressive theatrical experience in staging "Macbeth" by W. Shakespeare, the enrichment of the director's palette of expressive stage means, and the improvement of methodological approaches to the successful adaptation of works within the tragic genre

**Keywords:** history of theatrical productions; stage adaptation; features of directorial interpretation; stage imagery; acting achievements; expressive means

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## Introduction

Directing and acting skills required systematic and continuous development. In this process, studying the history of stage productions was particularly valuable; it not only broadened the understanding of interpretative possibilities for dramaturgical material but also deepened the insight into the relationship between the author's intent and its stage embodiment. A historical-critical analysis of performances allowed for the identification of the evolution of directorial concepts and methods of acting transformation, while opening new horizons in the interpretation of classical texts. It was through the interaction of theoretical reflection and the practical realisation of drama that a holistic vision of modern performing arts was formed. One of the most studied and relevant subjects of theatre analysis remained the work of William Shakespeare, particularly his play "Macbeth", which served as a model of profound dramaturgical complexity and multi-layered meaning. For several centuries, "Macbeth" has not only retained its stage appeal but has been continually revitalised within shifting cultural and social contexts. The production history of "Macbeth" has attracted the attention of numerous researchers, who analyse directorial concepts, interpretative approaches, acting specifics, and the nature of artistic means across various cultural environments (Cerdá *et al.*, n.d.). New research expanded this perspective; for instance, Oxford University professor A. Lidster (2022) demonstrated how book publishers of the early modern era (late 16<sup>th</sup> – early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries) influenced the shaping of Shakespearean plays, which helped explain the diversity of stage versions of "Macbeth".

Within Ukrainian theatre studies, a circle of scholars has also addressed the production history of the tragedy "Macbeth", offering conceptual interpretations of the transformation of the play's imagery across different theatrical forms. D. Moskvitina (2017) reconstructed the reception of Shakespeare in the intellectual worldview of Ralph Waldo Emerson, demonstrating that for Emerson Shakespeare's texts functioned not merely as literary sources but as philosophical platforms for reflection on creativity, moral freedom, and universal values. Researcher argued that Emerson read Shakespeare as a genius, whose artistic method and anthropological vision became a model of creative self-affirmation for the American thinker. I. Makaryk (2010) examined the influence of Ukrainian theatre on the reception of Shakespeare within the national cultural context. Research by M. Labinskyi *et al.* (2022) elucidated the theoretical foundations of innovative Ukrainian theatre and the logic of stage interpretation, including the first Ukrainian production of Shakespeare's "Macbeth". In turn, M. Fowler (2025) analysed the formation of the artistic elite and theatrical culture in Soviet Ukraine, which created the conditions for such innovative productions. Within the framework of Ukrainian Shakespearean studies, the contribution of N. Torkut (2023)

has been particularly significant, as the author's scholarly work provided an important theoretical basis for understanding the transformation of the image of "Macbeth" in later historical and theatrical contexts, which proved essential for directorial development. Reviews of contemporary productions – including those by I. Golizdra (2025) and Music-review Ukraine (n.d.) – have documented not only thematic emphases but also formal features of modern interpretations of "Macbeth" on the Ukrainian stage, testifying to a heightened interest in contemporary theatrical readings of Shakespeare's tragedy in Ukraine.

Thus, the study of the stage history of the tragedy "Macbeth" has become a multifaceted phenomenon, covering a wide range of theoretical, critical and practical aspects of theatrical art. However, despite the large number of studies, the question of the relationship between the director's concept and the actor's embodiment, taking into account the historical stages of theatre development and changes in interpretation paradigms, still remained open and required further consideration. The aim of this article was to analyse the evolution of directorial and acting interpretations of Shakespeare's tragedy "Macbeth" in different historical and cultural contexts, with an emphasis on identifying the main stage innovations that shaped the artistic integrity of the productions. From the point of view of directing and acting, the works of a number of scholars have been valuable for researching the stated topic. The study used an interdisciplinary approach, which included methods such as historical and critical analysis, which allowed to trace the evolution of stage interpretations of "Macbeth" in the context of cultural and historical circumstances; comparative studies provided a comparative analysis of different theatrical versions of the play in national and aesthetic contexts; theatrical hermeneutics contributed to the identification of the semantic layers of the stage text through the interpretation of the director's decisions; elements of practical directing made it possible to use theatrical staging tools for a deeper understanding of the creative strategies used in specific performances.

## From the history of stage productions of the tragedy "Macbeth" by William Shakespeare on the stages of England and the Czech Republic

The first review of "Macbeth" during Shakespeare's lifetime was written by the occultist and astrologer to Queen Elizabeth I, Simon Forman, who saw the performance at the "Globe" Theatre on 20 April 1610 (Bloom & Marson, 2008). Shakespeare scholars have noted discrepancies between Forman's account and the play as it later appeared in print. For instance, he makes no mention of the apparition scene, of Hecate, of the man not born of woman, or of Birnam Wood. However, scholars

P. Mason & S. Clark (2015) have observed that Forman's reports were often inaccurate and incomplete, and that his interest lay not in "providing comprehensive accounts of productions" According to P. Tatspaugh (2003), with the change of the ruling elite in Great Britain in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, changes also took place in the cultural life of the empire. Shakespeare's plays were adapted to the tastes and preferences of the new era. Among the changes in the production of "Macbeth" that could be noticed were the expansion of the role of the witches (Wills, 1996), the introduction of new songs, dances and "flights", as well as the expansion of the role of Lady Macduff as the protagonist of Lady Macbeth. These performances were called puppet versions of "Macbeth".

The puppet version of "Macbeth" remained on the theatre stage for almost a century, and it was not until 1744 that the English actor D. Garrick managed to revive the play. D. Garrick claimed that his production of "Macbeth" was "as written by Shakespeare". In fact, this statement was false: he retained the expanded role of the witches and wrote a long death speech for Macbeth himself, excluding from his production the drunken old guard, the murder of Lady Macduff's son, and Malcolm Macduff's trial (Orgel, 1988). The role of Lady Macbeth, played by his friend and regular stage partner, actress H. Pritchard, was restored to its full grandeur, in keeping with the original source, and no longer depicted irrelevant moral contrasts with Lady Macduff (Gay, 2002). In his production, D. Garrick focused on the inner experiences of a character, who was torn between good and evil. Actor portrayed a man capable of observing himself, as if part of him remained untouched. In D. Garrick's version, Macbeth was a sensitive man, and nothing could turn him into a tyrant and despot (Williams, 2002).

According to S. Williams (2002), the next play was staged in 1778 by Sir J.F. Cambell, an actor at the Royal Theatre. The highlight of J.F. Campbell's production, as described by J. Moody (2002), was the "tall and majestic" actress S. Sidons, who became legendary in the role of Lady Macbeth. Unlike H. Pritchard's wild, demonic portrayal, S. Sidons' Lady Macbeth, although terrifying, was tender, loving and humane in the scenes, where actress expressed her regret and remorse. By portraying her actions as motivated by love for her husband, S. Siddons shifted part of the moral responsibility for all the murders away from him. According to P. Gay (2002), audiences found Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene particularly mesmerising, and theatre critic W. Hazlitt pointed out that "all her gestures were involuntary and mechanical – she glided across the stage and descended from it almost like a ghost". K. McLuskie (2005) described J.F. Cambell's decision to omit the ghost of Banquo, allowing the audience to see Macbeth's reaction as his wife and guests saw it, relying on the fact that the play was so well known that the audience already knew, when the ghost was supposed to appear on stage.

With the turn of the century, the interpretation of "Macbeth" also changed: authors did not deny that "Macbeth" depicted the conflict between "good" and "evil", but at the same time began to find a deeper meaning in the play: one in which confusion and deception became as important as moral truth. The productions were also subject to experimental directorial visions. In 1809, Royal Theatre actor R. Elliston created a popular adaptation of "Macbeth" at the Royal Circus as a pantomime performance, excluding all of Shakespeare's texts and partially retaining only the plot (Moody, 2002). In 1820, at Covent Garden, "Macbeth" by London's most popular actor, W.C. Macready, received mixed reviews from critics. W. Hazlitt noted that the interpretation of the characters was purely psychological: the witches lost all their magical powers, and the protagonist's downfall was caused solely by his personal conflict (Williams, 2002). The most famous Lady Macbeth in Macready's productions was Helen Faucit, who had an unsuccessful debut in the role in her early twenties but later gained recognition by embodying contemporary ideals of femininity (Gay, 2002). The two most outstanding stage images of Macbeth in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century were created by S. Phelps and C. King. Both became famous not so much for their interpretation of the characters as for the novelty of their productions. Sir Phelps restored almost all of Shakespeare's original text and added special effects: for example, the witches appeared behind green gauze, which allowed to appear and disappear with the help of stage lighting. A notable feature of C. King's productions was the accuracy of the costumes and sets: he transported his audience to 11<sup>th</sup>-century Scotland, full of incredible spectacles, including several elaborate royal processions. Literary scholar A. Nicoll (2009) noted that in King's production, "even nature was historically accurate". Macbeth, played by Irving, who was the most successful of the late Victorian actors, failed to win the audience's favour. His pursuit of psychological authenticity diminished certain aspects of the role: he portrayed Macbeth as a brave warrior and moral coward at the same time, without any remorse, who contemplated Duncan's murder even before his encounter with the witches (Williams, 2002).

Audiences of the Romantic era, and later of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, began to perceive the ethical issues of "Macbeth" more clearly: he was no longer guilty, but only psychologically deviant. However, it was only in the Modern era that interpreters first hinted at the radically problematic nature of Macbeth. In 20<sup>th</sup>-century productions and readings, "Macbeth" began to question the dualistic foundations of traditional morality, politics and cosmology. Two factors changed the nature of "Macbeth" productions in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: first, the development of acting skills under the influence of the ideas of K. Stanislavsky and B. Brecht; second, the rise to power of totalitarian regimes characterised by cruelty and repression. This influenced the staging of Shakespeare's "Macbeth", which

took on characteristics of rebellion and freedom. Audiences no longer sympathised with the heroic Macbeth, who was driven to murder by witches and Lady Macbeth, but saw him as inherently evil, and only Macbeth, who was similar to Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin and other dictators, was responsible for his actions (Williams, 2002).

Over time, theatrical representations of "Macbeth" increasingly came to express modernist subjectivism. A notable example is "Macbeth" directed by Sir Barry Jackson, which challenged audiences to confront the ideological divide separating modern psychological worldviews from the values of the Renaissance. His characters were dressed in contemporary clothing: khaki military uniforms, elegant cocktail dresses, and soldiers wielded machine guns rather than swords. The modernisation of costumes, props, and stage design had a powerful effect on spectators, bringing Shakespeare's tragedy closer to contemporary experience (Mullin, 1978). Critics acknowledged the striking visual impact of these choices, although the production did not enjoy widespread popular success. Nevertheless, Jackson's "Macbeth" did more than any other English production to undermine dualistic assumptions. It exposed the tension between the moral binaries audiences traditionally associated with "Macbeth" and the modern pressures that, in real life, blurred such values. According to Shakespearean performance scholar D. Bartholomeusz (1984), Jackson defamiliarised Macbeth by "erasing the struggle between good and evil" and displacing accepted forms of hedonism. Scientist further suggested that Lady Macbeth represents an amoral realm beyond consciousness, until she herself ultimately descends into a world of shadows and terror. Certain elements of this "terrifying" world – such as Macduff's invulnerability to gunfire – were utopian in nature, pointing to a subjective distortion of experience shaped by a "primitive" consciousness.

The thematic complexity of "Macbeth" distinguished modern, ostensibly "realistic" dramaturgy from Shakespeare's fundamentally non-naturalistic theatre. The American scholar Elmer Edgar Stoll argued that Shakespeare's characters were not created to resemble "real" people, but rather to serve dramatic functions, particularly moral contrast (Moschovakis, 2008). Academic historicism and cultural modernism accelerated a crisis in Shakespearean interpretation, both in reading and staging. Yet this crisis prompted critics and directors to articulate more clearly the dualistic premises they identified within the tragedy. The "original" "Macbeth" was lost to modern audiences beyond the possibility of restoration, and the only viable path for artists was to continue embodying a "modern Macbeth". In 1956, audiences at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre were able to experience "Macbeth" in a production notable for its internal coherence and artistic integrity, directed by Glen Byam Shaw, with Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh in the leading roles (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** Production of the play "Macbeth" directed by Glen Byam Shaw, 1956, United Kingdom. Scene 1

**Note:** Macbeth – Laurence Olivier; Lady Macbeth – Vivien Leigh

**Source:** based on S. Morris (2013)

In an era of total industrialisation, Glen Byam Shaw presented a true tragic hero with a deep and powerful soul (Shvedov, 1975). The talent of the actor Laurence Olivier, performing the role of Macbeth, succeeded in revealing the anti-tyrannical pathos of the tragedy. Macbeth is a majestic individual endowed with valuable qualities; in the world, no rival exists who could defeat him in single combat. The path of tyranny and murder leads Macbeth to total spiritual exhaustion, and ultimately to death. In the role of Macbeth, it is impossible to find a single line that openly and directly demonstrates the struggle between good and evil in the hero's soul. Olivier was able to show this struggle through a deep penetration not into the text, but into the spirit of Macbeth's lines – into the significant philosophical subtext with which they are filled.

In building the hero's exposition, Olivier revealed a combination of internal power and unrestrained ambition, which became Macbeth's starting point. Macbeth is focused only on the future; he dreams only of the crown and grandeur; as of yet, one cannot trace any negative qualities in this character that would later lead to brutal murders. Olivier's mastery was defined by the actor's rejection of a convenient cliché: that Macbeth was a glorious warrior and noble man, who became a criminal only after meeting the witches. The performer chose a more complex path, showing that as Macbeth sinks into a sea of cruelty, the positive aspects of his soul, "once stifled by ambition", begin to speak louder and louder. However, they can no longer change Macbeth's fate, as the logic of development drags him through new crimes toward an inevitable catastrophe. "False face must hide what the false heart doth know" (Shakespeare, 1986) –

audiences, who saw how Macbeth decided to commit murder after hesitation now heard the despair of a man, who understood that eternal torment awaited him. The necessity to conceal his thoughts, to lie, and to be hypocritical for the rest of his life caused unbearable spiritual suffering to the brave warrior. Such an interpretation of the final line allowed Olivier to show that even in moments of greatest resolve, a profound struggle occurs within Macbeth's soul – not a mere invention, but a bold discovery by the actor.

After the murder of Duncan, the final stage in the evolution of the main hero began – Macbeth proceeds to new crimes without hesitation, challenging fate, filled not with confidence in victory but only with the desire not to fall into the enemy's hands alive. The role of Duncan in the play became pivotal for launching the entire tragic dynamics of the work. He embodied legitimate power, virtue, and the moral order that existed in Scotland before the arrival of the usurper. The figure of Duncan created a distinct moral contrast with Macbeth: the just king is juxtaposed with the ambitious warrior who succumbs to the temptation of power. It was the murder of Duncan that became the ethical and narrative turning point, destroying the natural and political order and releasing the forces of chaos and moral decay into the world. Duncan's death reflected the loss of harmony in the state and symbolised the beginning of Macbeth's degradation, as he finally crossed the line between intent and action, between humanity and tyranny. The significance of this technique – where resolute words increasingly diverge from the intonation and the external pattern of the role, expressing Macbeth's intensifying spiritual void – grows as the tragedy's resolution approaches. Through intonation and correctly placed accents, Olivier penetrated the internal psychological world of his hero. The use of this technique as the primary means of conveying the hero's internal crisis harmoniously communicated the entire leitmotif of the tragedy, where the hero always encounters "two truths".

The artistic technique that Olivier placed at the heart of his stage interpretation of Macbeth reached particular ideological significance in the tragedy's finale: Macbeth sums up his life after receiving news of his wife's death. In Olivier's eyes – the sadness of a suicide; life has proven to be a tale told by an idiot. The internal turmoil revealed by the actor served as an important expression of the main hero's atmosphere of doom. In creating the image of Lady Macbeth, Vivien Leigh believed that Macbeth's wife should be an elegant woman who combines external attractiveness with strength of character. Leigh makes the leitmotif of her role not a harsh will that suppresses Macbeth, but unconditional love for her husband; she is ready for anything for the sake of his happiness. Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene is of great importance for highlighting the main hero's spiritual devastation. Lady Macbeth's voice, which initially sounded powerless without sharp intonation, began to tremble more strongly in

her final monologue, through which the actress conveyed the spiritual tragedy of a woman broken under an unbearable burden that she had previously carried with pride (Fig. 2).



**Figure 2.** Production of the play "Macbeth" directed by Glen Byam Shaw, 1956, United Kingdom. Scene 2

**Note:** Macbeth – Laurence Olivier; Lady Macbeth – Vivien Leigh

**Source:** based on K. Salome (2019)

Director G. Byam-Shaw, the leading performers, and the entire cast made a concerted effort to depict Macbeth's degeneration, which was most vividly expressed through the senseless cruelty of the usurper. Reviewers responded favourably to Byam-Shaw's direction, while Laurence Olivier's performance in the title role received the highest acclaim. Immediately after the premiere of "Macbeth" in June 1956, the theatre critic J.K. Trewin wrote in the London theatrical bulletin "The World of the Theatre" that "Laurence Olivier was the finest Macbeth of the era" (Darlington, 1968). A new era generates new Macbeths and new readings of Shakespeare's great tragedy. One such interpretation was the production directed by P. Boháč together with his experimental theatre, the Spitfire Company, staged in Prague in 2015. This production, entitled "Vladimir Macbetin", was inspired by William Shakespeare's tragedy. The action was transferred to a future Russia, and the central character was conceived as a prototype of its current president. Responding to a question from journalists of "Radio Liberty" as to why the Russian president had been chosen as the prototype for "Vladimir Macbetin", P. Boháč explained that, at present (the premiere took place in 2015), "there are very few dictators left in Europe, and the search for a contemporary figure comparable to Macbeth led him to Putin" as a striking embodiment of tyranny. Boháč sought to combine in a single image various traits characteristic of dictators – demagoguery,

manipulation, and narcissism – since these qualities are embedded in the context of Shakespeare's tragedy and in the story of Macbeth itself (Shymov, 2015). The action of the performance unfolded as a retrospective. In an airport, the protagonist Vladimir Macbetin attempts to flee the country after being betrayed by those closest to him: his entourage, advisers, and associates – people who, like himself, had extensive experience in eliminating the unwanted. Everything is already in the past for him: all the most significant events and principal crimes of his life have already occurred, and he is now given the opportunity to reflect upon and assess them. Fate, however, does not "sleep": at a certain moment he is informed that the plane has been delayed, and this news becomes, in the circumstances, in which he finds himself, the voice of destiny.

The director focused on the emotions of a man, who until recently possessed immense power, as Macbeth once did, and who suddenly finds himself with nothing left. The loneliness of the tyrant is the central theme of the production. P. Boháč emphasised moments of crisis, showing how they affect a person and how such experiences are endured. The figure of Lady Macbeth was also presented, and, as in Shakespeare, she becomes the driving force of events. Manipulation operates on political and propagandistic levels, as well as on personal and sexual ones. For the contemporary audience, the director also introduced manipulation on an advertising level: people influence and manipulate one another, while rulers themselves turn out to be under influence, captive to the context in which they exist, and in particular to their own fears (Fig. 3).



Source: based on Ya. Shymov (2015)

The voices of the witches from "Macbeth" in "Vladimir Macbetin's" production were heard through advertising commercials, demonstrating invisible manipulation of people. The director combined two levels of reality – what the main character and Lady Macbeth saw, and what the audience saw: the boundary between

consciousness and subconsciousness. The fact that Macbeth did not feel guilty about anything did not mean that the "witches" of fate did not pursue him. He was destroyed by the conflict between consciousness and subconsciousness, leading him to a certain form of madness. The actualisation of "Macbeth" is a reminder of the eternal, which has allowed this tragedy to survive for many centuries. The transfer of the events of the play to Russia is very important in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, because it was through art that Europeans came to understand the modern world, which changed not only Central Europe but the whole world.

### ● **Macbeth in Ukraine. Landmark performances**

Shakespeare's tragedy remains relevant in Ukraine – an important phenomenon on the theatrical stage was the first and one of the best interpretations of Shakespeare's works, the production of "Macbeth" by the director of the "Berezil" art association, L. Kurbas, in April 1924. This performance remains the most enigmatic until 2025. It is worth noting that it already contains elements of sharp, expressive characteristics directed against the romanticisation of Shakespeare's characters. The performance was a storming of the heights that attracted the attention of many theatre artists of the 1920s. In L. Kurbas's production, the spiritual impoverishment of the ambitious was embodied in the deliberately unspectacular poverty of the costumes (Fig. 4). L. Kurbas did not want the audience to be emotionally involved in what was happening on stage and to empathise with the characters. By destroying the audience's ability to empathise, the director taught the actors to step out of their roles while on stage, revealing to himself and the actors the secret of "alienation" as an effective form of theatre for sharp publicistic thought (Fowler, 2025).



**Figure 4.** Scene with witches. "Macbeth" by L. Kurbas

Note: I. Maryanenko – Macbeth; G. Babiivna, O. Steshenko, and V. Panchenko – witches

Source: Les Kurbas Centre (2020)

The director's innovations were aimed at freeing the "soul of the play" from all the usual layers and making

its idea as contemporary as possible. The essence of the performance was the idea of the misery of a man, who devotes his energy to the struggle for power and the crown, the mundanity and repetitiveness of crimes in this struggle. The director denied the greatness of the ambitious men of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and Macbeth appeared before the audience as a harsh man of elementary motivations, dominated by straightforward cruelty. He did not appear either majestic or significant; doubts and the torments of a troubled conscience were manifestations of fear in the tyrant, and deep feelings remained beyond his reach. Lady Macbeth appeared even more severe than her husband – all the ambition that women usually expressed through displays of beauty, wealth, and happiness was channelled into Lady Macbeth's lust for power. She had no feelings left even for her husband, who only irritated her with his cowardice. Tall, unattractive, with sharp features and expressive gestures, she loved herself and power for herself (Fig. 5).



**Figure 5.** Scene before the murder of King Duncan.

“Macbeth” directed by Les Kurbas

**Note:** Macbeth – I. Marianenko; Lady Macbeth – L. Hakkebush

**Source:** Open Kurbas (n.d.)

The paths opened by Kurbas in “Macbeth” proved to be highly promising for the theatre of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The most significant among them were the possibility of reading the play as a generalised history, almost as a parable, and the technique of stepping out of character, the actor's “distancing”, as a means of sharpening the conceptual framework of the production and establishing new relationships between actor and spectator (Zaitsev, 2024). The same aim underpinned the use of pantomimes and intermedia in Kurbas's production, as well as the casting of a single actor in diametrically opposed roles. Contradictory in its very nature, Kurbas's Macbeth became an effective catalyst for the development of Ukrainian theatre in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century,

while the director's artistic discoveries and innovations in this production were clearly addressed to the future. The staging was not only political in character, but also profoundly aesthetic. Kurbas's “Macbeth” did not merely challenge established notions of world theatrical classics within 20<sup>th</sup>-century Ukraine; through a chain of endless betrayals, the director succeeded in revealing a brutal, power-hungry world strikingly similar to that of the audience seated in the auditorium. Les Kurbas was among the first figures in European art to combine film and live actors on stage, integrating cinema organically into theatrical art (Makaryk, 2010).

Contemporary critical responses to Kurbas's “Macbeth” were ambivalent, yet none of the commentators remained indifferent. The director and artistic director of the Stalin Drama Theatre, V. Vasylko (1969), recalled “Macbeth” as an “ascetic, austere, grey and cold performance that did not enjoy success with audiences”. A review of the production was also written by the director H. Khotkevych, whose worldview was grounded in the belief that, following the end of the era of the theatrical “coryphaei”, Ukrainian theatre had entered a period of decline. His review was published in Literature. Science. Art, a supplement to the News of the AUCEC (the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee), on 1 June 1924. For Khotkevych, the production represented a “failure”: he failed to comprehend Kurbas's new vision of the tragedy, rejected most of the innovative directing techniques, and did not sense that within these forms and rhythms a new theatre of the twentieth century was being born (Kovalchuk, 2012). The scholar L. Kovalchuk (2012) likewise concluded that the response to Kurbas's work “absorbed the views of all supporters of a more moderate, traditional art, who perceived new radical artistic forms with scepticism”. It was precisely such “negative” responses that provided the necessary contrasting background essential to any thorough scholarly investigation, against which the true contours of outstanding artistic phenomena emerge with even greater clarity – among them, Kurbas's “Macbeth”.

Taking into account professional stages, various amateur scenes, and projects, “111 stage versions of Shakespeare have appeared in Ukraine from spring 2014 to spring 2025” (Ukrinform, 2025). A landmark event was “Macbeth” directed by I. Uryvskyi at the Ivan Franko National Academic Drama Theatre in Kyiv, which premiered on 27-28 February and 1 March 2025 (Fig. 6). Commenting on this directing interpretation, I. Golizdra (2025) wrote in her review: “This is an interpretation that resonates with the contemporary world, where information often functions as a powerful tool of control and manipulation... Indeed, the classical tragedy has been transformed into a “synthetic interactive performance” through the use of the latest theatrical means: lighting design, video projections, sound, and even direct contact with the audience”.



**Figure 6.** Scene before Duncan's murder.

“Macbeth” by I. Uryvskyi

**Note:** Lady Macbeth – T. Mikhina; Macbeth – A. Hurezov.

**Photo:** Yu. Weber

**Source:** based on I. Golizdra (2025)

The performance impressed the audience with its use of mirrors on screens facing the auditorium (representing those, who are manipulated nowadays), effects and projections controlled by the actors (rembodying those who manipulate), a sandy area on the stage (a symbol of decline), the stylistics of black costumes that blurred the boundaries between the past and the present, and, in general, the powerful multimedialisation of the stage space. Lady Macbeth gained weight in the play, transforming from a seductress into a dangerous strategist in the political game, a flexible manipulator. M. Khachatryan and T. Mikhina managed to convey Lady Macbeth's inner state (Fig. 7). “The physical plasticity of the actresses and their interaction with the space are among the most interesting aspects of the production. The contrast between the outward restraint and inner tension of their heroine creates an effect of tension that is felt throughout the performance” (Golizdra, 2025). Music-review Ukraine (n.d.) named T. Mikhina (Lady Macbeth) and A. Timoshenko (King Duncan) as the favourites of the performance for their most organic acting on stage.



**Figure 7.** Scene of Macbeth's meeting with his wife.

“Macbeth” by I. Uryvskyi

**Note:** Lady Macbeth – M. Khachatryan; Macbeth – O. Rudinsky.

**Photo:** Yulia Weber

**Source:** based on I. Golizdra (2025)

Despite the fact that the production did not escape criticism, such as the unconvincing abrupt transition from the noble hero to the criminal Macbeth-Gurezov and the final downfall; the dominance of the form of the production over the depth of human feelings. Music-review Ukraine (n.d.) stated: “Uryvskyi is a director who works with a feel for the material... He managed to interpret “Macbeth” through a modern prism, using new theatrical means, but preserving the magic of the original”. The production was also called “one of the most daring and visually rich attempts to reinterpret Shakespeare on the Ukrainian stage” (Music-review Ukraine, n.d.). In contemporary Shakespeare studies, several approaches to analysing the stage history of “Macbeth” have emerged. P. Tatspaugh (2003) analysed the peculiarities of the stage transformation of Macbeth's image depending on the socio-cultural context, while S. Orgel (1988) emphasised the symbolic significance of the visual elements of the production, including lighting, costumes and set design. In the studies by P. Gay (2002) and S. Williams (2002), attention was focused on the psychological nature of acting and the embodiment of the characters' internal conflicts through the means of contemporary stage language. E. Smith (2020) analysed the key themes, dramaturgical techniques and cultural context of Shakespeare's works, which provided a better understanding of the universal approaches to productions of “Macbeth” in different historical and national traditions. Ukrainian interpretations of “Macbeth” – from L. Kurbas' innovative, ahead-of-its-time production to I. Uryvskyi – have consistently demonstrated the ability of Ukrainian theatre to interpret Shakespeare's tragedy through the prism of social upheavals, political transformations and changes in aesthetic thinking.

## Conclusions

The study analysed the development of stage interpretations of Shakespeare's tragedy “Macbeth” in the context of cultural, historical and aesthetic transformations of different eras. The image of “Macbeth” has undergone a significant evolution: from the classic tragic hero of the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries to a symbol of tyrannical power in contemporary productions, reflecting the specific political and philosophical paradigms of the time. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the emphasis in stage versions increasingly shifted to the psychological depth of the characters, which corresponded to the artistic tastes and cultural orientations of the time. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in G. Byam Shaw's production, Macbeth's intense internal struggle was revealed, while contemporary interpretations, such as P. Bohach's play “Vladimir Macbetin”, highlighted the tragedy through the prism of political criticism, demonstrating tyranny as a personal and social catastrophe. In 1924, Ukrainian director L. Kurbas attempted to reinterpret “Macbeth” in the aesthetics of expressionism on the stage of the “Berezil” Theatre, focusing on the mechanisms of power as a factor of

dehumanisation. Contemporary director I. Uryvskyi used multimedia to enhance symbolism and psychological tension. All of the above examples illustrate the development of the image of Macbeth in general, allowing to appreciate the universality of the tragedy and the multifaceted nature of the directorial and acting decisions. A study of the characteristics of experimental theatrical productions of "Macbeth" by Ukrainian directors during the 2010s and 2020s could prove fruitful. V. Troitsky's production of "Prologue to Macbeth" at the Kyiv Theatre Studio "DAKH" could be a valuable example of combining the expressive means of classical, folk and avant-garde art. Prospects for further research lie in studying the

influence of digital technologies, the political context, and the psychological and philosophical analysis of the image of Macbeth, which opens up new opportunities for understanding and staging the classic tragedy.

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## Світовий досвід сценічних втілень «Макбета»

**Анотація.** Особливості режисерсько-акторських трактувань відомих театральних постановок «Макбета» стають дієвим засобом поповнення мистецького досвіду сценічного втілення трагедії В. Шекспіра. Метою дослідження було актуалізувати матеріали спеціальних літературно-мистецьких джерел про постановочні режисерсько-акторські версії «Макбета» В. Шекспіра, якості постановок. У дослідженні було визначено суттєві особливості постановок трагедії. Окреслено специфіку маріонеткових версій «Макбета», яка стосувалася ролі відьом та леді Макдуф. Простежено режисерське вирішення англійського актора Д. Герріка, позначене психологізацією Макбета та величчю леді Макбет. Відзначено режисерські прийоми сценічної інтерпретації трагедії актора Королівського театру Д. Кембла, спрямовані на зменшення вини Макбета та відсутність актора-привіда в сценах із ним. Акцентовано на експериментальній адаптації постановки актора Королівського театру Р. Еллістона для Королівського цирку в формі пантомімічного перформансу. Встановлено вплив вираженого психологічного аспекту сценічних образів персонажів трагедії в постановці лондонського актора В. Макріді. Також, було з'ясовано внесок творців найвидатніших сценічних образів Макбета середини XIX століття: С. Фелпса, Ч. Кінга, Г. Ірвінга. Окреслено поступову зміну психологічного девіантизму – основної прикмети постановок шекспірівської трагедії епохи Романтизму XIX ст. модерністським суб'єктивізмом XX ст., конкретизовано характерні штрихи осучасненого «Макбета» Б. Джексона. У роботі було встановлено причини кризи шекспірівської інтерпретації та прочитання трагедії та деталізовано позитивні якості режисерської роботи Г. Байєма-Шоу в Шекспірівському меморіальному театрі за участю Л. Олів'є та В. Лі. Простежено ракурс осучасненого прочитання величної трагедії П. Богача та його експериментального театру Spiritfire Company. Було з'ясовано мету нововведень та прийом реалізації однієї з найзагадковішої інтерпретації трагедії режисера мистецького об'єднання «Березіль» Леся Курбаса. Практичне значення дослідження полягає в надбанні прогресивного театрального досвіду сценічних утілень трагедії Вільяма Шекспіра «Макбет», поповненні палітри виражальних сценічних засобів постановника, удосконаленні методичних підходів успішної адаптації творів трагедійного жанру

**Ключові слова:** історія театральних постановок; сценічна адаптація; особливості режисерської інтерпретації; сценічні образи; акторські досягнення; виражальні засоби

Журнал

# МИСТЕЦТВОЗНАВЧІ ЗАПИСКИ

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