

Hidden Gems: Flute Repertoire of Ukraine

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What if J. Brahms or J. Cage were discovered only today? Would “Brahms's style” and Cage’s “4’33” compositions be as new and revolutionary as they were perceived during their lifetimes? What if the Mozart Flute Concerto No.1 were discovered today? Would it become our standard repertoire and orchestra audition requirement?

Due to the unfortunate geopolitical history, Ukrainian culture was hidden and severely oppressed for centuries. Many artists were appropriated, silenced, and eliminated, and their significance lessened; therefore, they had no chance to be present in the music around the world and raised in full glory. Although we will never know how influential they could be if given a chance during their lifetime, today, I would like to share with you a few of these voices of Ukraine; voices that are worth looking into and that deserve a chance to be rediscovered by the flute community in Florida and the US.

Mykola Lysenko (1842–1912)



Mykola Lysenko was a pianist, composer, ethnomusicologist, conductor, and who is a central figure in Ukrainian music. Because of his focus on folk music, his influence can be compared to Hungarian composer Bela Bartók. His musical legacy includes more than 44 piano works, 17 operas, hundreds of vocal works, orchestras, string quartets, and many instrumental works. His most famous opera *Taras Bulba* (1891) was banned and never performed during his lifetime (during the occupation by Russian Empire) because Lysenko insisted on the Ukrainian language libretto.

Fantasy on Two Ukrainian Themes (1872–73, fl, pf) for flute and piano begins with an *Andante grave* introducing elements of the first folk song, “Oh, I’m miserable.” The story of a Cossack who falls in love with an engaged woman, so he feels miserable and tries to convince himself that he doesn’t need her. Since Cossacks were warriors, he tries to fill himself with words, “Why do you need a dark-eyed woman, fellow? Cossack’s woman is a saber at his side.” A second folk tune is introduced at *Vivo giojoso*— “Oh merciful Ganju”—which has satirical lyrics.

If you would like to flavor your repertoire with something challenging, and lyrical that integrates authentic folk and a brilliant ending, then I would highly recommend looking into this romantic period work.

Available at:

[https://imslp.org/wiki/Fantasy_on_2_Ukrainian_Themes%2C_Op.21_\(Lysenko%2C_Mykola\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Fantasy_on_2_Ukrainian_Themes%2C_Op.21_(Lysenko%2C_Mykola))

Yevhen Stankovych (b. 1942)



Born in 1942 in Ukraine, Stankovych is one of the leading figures of 20th- and 21st-century Ukrainian music and a key figure in the flute repertoire. “His artistic horizon impresses with the breadth of different moods, feelings, and sharpness of worldview,” Ukrainian Live Classic. Stankovych’s first folk opera, *When the Fern Blooms* (1977), composed on request of the French concert company Alitepa for the worldwide exhibition in Paris in 1978, was prohibited from being performed. Russian Soviets felt danger in raising Ukrainian identity and destroyed the opera sets and costumes. The opera was supposed to be performed twenty-five times in Paris. This is how Stankovych’s desire to show the beauty of Ukrainian music and folk was stolen and destroyed.

Dances on Flowers (2011, fl, pf) has a rich color palette — it’s sincere, emotional, dreamy, dramatic, and challenging. It’s influenced by childhood memories of HC Andersen’s fairy tale “*Thumbelina*.” The music has a clear story vision and takes us on a journey from the beginning to the end. You can almost tell the “*Thumbelina*” fairy tale along the way. It’s unique and fresh. This work will transfer the audience to the world of HC Andersen’s fairy tales. From that perspective, I can hardly compare this piece to any other existing flute repertoire. That’s why it deserves to be discovered.

Available at:

<https://www.editionsvitser.com/catalog/dances-on-flowers/c-23/p-108>

For the last, I am excited to announce that this is the first article of my series about the unknown Ukrainian Flute Repertoire. More to be discovered in the next newsletter.

You can catch Dmytro performing Ukrainian works at the convention on Sunday at 10:00 am.