

Featured Composer

Oleksandr Shchetynsky

The Society's first experience with Shchetynsky's music was his Requiem, which premiered in 2023. This is Shchetynsky's first commission for the SF Choral Society. See reviews in [SF Classical Voice](#), [SF Examiner](#), and [CivicCenterBlogspot](#).

We look forward to meeting the composer in person. Join us for a pre-concert talk with Shchetynsky before each performance. Tickets at [cityboxoffice.com](#)



Oleksandr Shchetynsky was born in Kharkiv, Ukraine in 1960 and, in 1983, he graduated from V. Borisov's composition class at the Kharkiv Art Institute.* He took part in Summer Courses for Young Composers in Kazimierz Dolny, Poland (1990, 1991), where he attended lectures by Louis Andriessen, Witold Lutoslawski, Krzysztof Penderecki, Boguslaw Schaeffer, Magnus Lindberg and he completed the course of computer music at the Krakow Music Academy, Poland. Between 1982 and 1990, he taught composition at a children's music school in Kharkiv and, from 1991 to 1995, he taught composition, instrumentation and techniques of contemporary composition at the Kharkiv Art Institute.

He was among the organizers of several contemporary music festivals in Ukraine and Russia and, in 1995, founded the concert series New Music in Kharkiv.

Since 1997 he has been a member of the Art Council of the International Contemporary Music Festival Contrasts in Lviv and, in 2001, he was program coordinator of the International Youth Music Forum in Kiev.

He has received major international awards for his orchestral work *Glossolalies*, his chamber work *The Preacher's Word* for soprano and string quartet, *Flute Concerto* and his *Baptism, Temptation and Prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ* for bass, clarinet, trombone, viola, cello and double bass, *Sonata da camera* for cello and chamber ensemble and his opera *Annunciation*.

Alexey Parin's program notes for *Annunciation* say,

"Alexander Shchetynsky established himself as a consequent stickler for avant-garde... His spirituality reveals in strict, ascetically beautiful sounds that are full of impression due to their hermeticism, within the context of up-to-date musical language."



A cursory search of Shchetynsky's name will return many reviews of performances of his instrumental compositions on new and avant-garde programs—his "Face to a Star" (1991) is mentioned in a New York Times article in 2004. The reviews all remark on the way Shchetynsky weaves the past with the present, or in other words, a listener will hear his writing visit/borrow/reference ideas from distinct eras that weave seamlessly with current trends.

Shchetynsky worked on his Requiem—for SATB choir and string—between 1991 and 2004. A listener may interpret the 13-year time period as a time of slow-simmering ideas—in 1991 the Soviet Union collapsed and Ukraine was finally its own state. The premiere of Requiem took place in 2004 at the renowned Contrasts Festival in Lviv, Ukraine, where it was performed by the esteemed chamber choir Gloria and the chamber orchestra Leopold, under the baton of conductor Volodymyr Syvokhip.

In his own words, Shchetynsky says

"Requiem for choir and strings is written for the traditional Latin text. As in my other compositions in recent years, I continue here the development of a new meta-language that includes stylistic elements from various periods: Gregorian Chant and early polyphony, Baroque figures, operatic melodies of the 19th century, modernistic innovations of the 20th century. . . In contrast to collage techniques of poly-stylistics (L. Berio, M. Kagel, A. Schnittke), this meta-language smoothes the contrasts between various styles and incorporates them as much as possible into one discourse, making the transitions from one style to another imperceptible.

I aim at overcoming eclecticism and finding a new unity in a combination of those musical elements that historically never existed next to each other. Placed in an unexpected context, these splinters of old styles and epochs are transformed and affect each other. In the foreground, one sees not the neatness of stylization, but the adaptation of borrowed idioms, a personal "comment" on them. Music that on the surface may remind one of familiar classics - something from Verdi, Brahms or Palestrina, nevertheless reflects the sensibility of our own global and universal time which is aiming at a dialogue of cultures and their interaction."

*The Kharkiv Art Institute is now named The Kharkiv I. P. Kotlyarevsky University of the Arts, and Shchetynsky is a Senior lecturer of Composition and Orchestration.

In 2000, his chamber opera Annunciation received a prestigious Golden Mask award in the category of innovation. He has also won prizes at the Witold Lutosławski International Composers Competition in Poland and the Henri Dutilleux Competition in France, as well as placing for the International Gustav Mahler Composition Prize.

1. **Gabel, Gerald.** Fourteen Composers in Today's Ukraine. <http://www.ex-tempore.org/gabel.htm>
2. <https://www.geocities.ws/shchetynsky/reviews.htm>
3. **Rud, Polina.** The developments of spiritual music traditions in Oleksandr Shchetynsky's creative work. American Research Journal of Humanities Social Science (ARJHSS), 2021. E-ISSN: 2378-702X. Volume-04, Issue-07, pp-68-71

Other relevant reading:

Chekan, Yuri. A Millennial Tradition: the Choral Art of Ukraine. OCTOBER 15, 2012 IN: FOCUS IFCM · ICB
<http://icb.ifcm.net/millennial-tradition-choral-art-ukraine/>

Colin, Molly. After an Invasion, Ukraine's Cultural Legacy Comes to Light. SFCV, July 6, 2022.
<https://www.sfcv.org/articles/feature/after-invasion-ukraines-cultural-legacy-comes-light>

What was Rachmaninoff's relationship to Ukraine?

<https://day.kyiv.ua/en/article/culture/sergei-rachmaninoff-and-ukraine>

Which well-known classical composers have ties to Ukraine? 🇺🇦

Fun-facts from Dr. Laura Stanfield Prichard

1. PROKOFIEV WAS BORN THERE

Sergei Prokofiev was born in the village of *Sontsivka* which, at the time of his birth, was within the Katerynoslavsk Governorate (1802 – 1925) of the Russian Empire (1721 – 1917). Today, Prokofiev's birthplace is in Ukraine. Prokofiev's mother, Maria Zhytkova (1855 – 1924) was born into a serf family in Sontsivka, which at the time of her birth was owned by the Sheremetev Family. Apparently, Dmitri Sheremetev (1803 – 1871), whose mother had been an actress and a freed serf herself, took particular interest in talented serf children. As such, Maria Zhytkova was exposed to music and the literary arts as a young child – a love she eventually passed down to her son. Sergei Prokofiev was christened in Sontsivka's local church of Sts. Peter and Paul on June 23, 1891. The church records duly state that both of Prokofiev's parents were Orthodox Christians. His godfather was his father's brother, Pyotr Prokofiev, a merchant from Kharkiv (which is a city in Ukraine). His godmother was his mother's sister, Tatyana Zhytkova.



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According to the records of the Central Statistical Committee of the Russian Empire, in 1886 (5 years before Prokofiev's birth) the village of Sontsivka had 938 inhabitants. By 1897 (6 years after Prokofiev's birth), there were 1228 people residing in Sontsivka. In the 1920s, when the area became part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (1919 – 1991), the village name of Sontsivka was changed to Krase. In Russian, *krasne* means *red* – the official colour of communism. On June 2, 2016, the village once again became Sontsivka, Ukraine.

2. MOZART'S YOUNGER SON SETTLED THERE

Franz Xaver Wolfgang Mozart (1791 – 1844) was born in Vienna within the realm of the Habsburg-Lorraine Monarchy (1780 – 1918). Since his father Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 1791) passed away when he was only 4 months old, F.X. Wolfgang Mozart Jr. never really knew him. In 1808 at the age of 17, after completing 8 years of music lessons with Salieri (for free) Franz Xaver Wolfgang Mozart moved to Lviv (known at the time as *Lemberg*), the capital of the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria (1772 – 1918), a crown land within the Austrian Empire (1804 – 1867). Mozart lived, taught, composed and performed in Lviv for the next 30 years – more than half of his life. He conducted a version of his father's *Requiem* in 1826 in Lviv, Ukraine.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lviv_National_Music_Academy

<https://www.yusypovych.com/eng/Franz-Xaver-Wolfgang-Mozart/>

3. TCHAIKOVSKY had family roots there

4. Both sides of STRAVINSKY's family were Ukrainian

Igor Stravinsky's father, Fyodor (Fëdir) Stravinsky (1843 – 1902) was born in the village of Holovyntsi, outside the city of Minsk, which at the time of his birth was within the Minsk Governorate (1793 – 1921) of the Russian Empire (1721 – 1917). He was a bass singer who began his opera career at the Kyiv Opera. He kept a diary and notes in both Ukrainian and Russia. He had a large library which included many Ukrainian authors of his time. He could recite Taras Shevchenko's (1814 – 1861) *Kobzar* from memory. Fedir Stravinsky counted among his friends and frequently preformed the works of Ukrainian composers Mykola Lysenko (1842 – 1912) and Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840 – 1893). Igor Stravinsky's grandfather, Ihnatij Stravinsky is said to have been a descendant of the Soulima-Stravinsky family who drew their roots from the 17th and 18th centuries and the central regions of Ukraine of the Kozak Hetmanate (1649 – 1764). Indeed, Igor Stravinsky chose to name his son Sviatoslav-Soulima (1910 – 1994) as a tribute to his family ancestry. Igor Stravinsky's mother, Hanna Kholodovska (1854 –



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1939) was a native of Kyiv whom Fedir Stravinsky married in 1874 during his sojourn at the Kyiv Opera (1873 – 1876).

5. SOME AMERICAN MODERNISTS

Both of Leonard Bernstein's parents were from Rivne, Ukraine.

George Gershwin's paternal grandfather, Jakov Gershovitz, was born in Odessa, Ukraine.

+ The Ukrainian folk song

“Oi khodyt son kolo vikon” (A Dream Passes by the Windows)

influenced the melody for Gershwin's “Summertime.”

Leo Ornstein and film composer Dmitri Tiomkin were born in Kremenchug, Ukraine.

Sholom Secunda (“Bei mir bistu shein”) was born in Alexandria, Ukraine.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bei_Mir_Bistu_Shein

Theorist and teacher of Gershwin, Joseph Schillinger was born in Kharkiv, Ukraine.

Lazar Weiner was born in Cherkasy, Ukraine.

6. SOME AMERICAN PERFORMERS OF UKRAINIAN DESCENT

Actress Mila Kunis was born in Chernivtsi, Ukraine.

Jeery Stiller's paternal grandparents emigrated to the US from the western Ukrainian border region.

<https://www.imdb.com/list/ls523933336/>

RESPONSES TO CHORISTER QUESTIONS

Debates about performing certain things in certain places:

An American composer conducting in Odessa, Ukraine

<https://symphony.org/features/coda-an-american-in-odessa/>

<https://vladislavdavidzon.substack.com/p/the-sound-of-a-city-at-war-odessa>

American Orchestras promoting Ukrainian music recently

<https://americanorchestras.org/listening-to-ukraine/>

Russian-identifying composers in the Ukraine?

<https://www.rferl.org/a/tchaikovsky-ukraine-music-conervatory-remove-name-russia-ination/32299420.html>

Russian-born artists performing at government buildings in the US?

<https://lidiyayankovskaya.com/newsdata/washingtonpostopinion>



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Music Conservatory in Odessa [Odesa, Ukraine]

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odesa_National_Academy_of_Music

Music Conservatory in Kiev (Kiïv, Ukraine)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukrainian_National_Academy_of_Music

Music Conservatory in Kharkiv, Ukraine

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kharkiv_National_Kotlyarevsky_University_of_Arts