

## Chapter 4

### Wedding Songs and Music<sup>1</sup>

The vocal-musical component of weddings was very diverse. Everything that came to mind at the wedding table was immediately expressed in jokes and sarcastic remarks. Women at a wedding eased their anguish by singing sorrowful songs about unhappy love, betrayal and difficult times with a partner they did not love. Ballads were sung about a bride who became a bird and the daughter-in-law who was transformed into a poplar tree, various humorous ditties and *chastivkas* rang out, drinking songs and embellished toasts. Improvisation and a quick wit were important and were manifest with zeal, the whole wedding drama being perceived as a giant melting-pot of differing moods, feelings and experiences, stirred up by a sharp wit and biting anecdotes, which flowed in a river of yearning and unshed tears, then inflated with majestic festivity. Despite the diversity of song genres in the wedding drama, all the wedding songs proper accompanying the ritual parts were stylistically interrelated. This was due, firstly to their utilitarian nature, the repetition of the same melodies for various wedding rituals. Herein lies the pliancy and elasticity of the separate intonational melodic formulae accompanying hundreds of different texts.

Due to the conservatism of the marriage customs they accompanied, wedding songs were closely associated with the region in which they had been performed from time immemorial. For this reason wedding melodies provide a wealth of material for the study of local peculiarities and regional musical styles in Ukraine, as well as providing material for research into the Ancient Slav origins of folklore, which in wedding melodies is manifest in all its purity and inviolability, without later influences.

The western parts of Ukraine's ethnic territory, being adjacent to Poland, Hungary, Rumania and Slovakia, have during the long period of their cultural development, undergone linguistic and ethnographic influences and thus the folklore here is far more varied in its regional peculiarities than that of Central Ukraine.

In comparing wedding songs from Transcarpathia, Bukovyna, Galicia and the Lemko region with similar songs recorded in Central Ukraine, Podillia or Polissia, it is not difficult to spot the similarities in their melodic structure (the small range of a fourth or fifth diatonism with rarely altered degrees and characteristic refrains). Such similarities in the basic structure of the melodic makeup of the folk music of Eastern Ukraine attest to the mutual development of the musical culture of the entire nation in earlier times, giving the songs a specific, unique tonality.

The most typical characteristics of weddings in Central Ukraine are manifest in the account by Demchenko (Monastyryshche, Kyiv gubernia). Using this account as a basis, one can compare it to other records, for example to the north

(Verkhovynets, Skvyra, Kyiv region), the northeast (Lysenko, Boryspil, Poltava gubernia; Kolomyjchenko, Chernihiv region) and to the southwest (Skaletsky, Bershad, Vinnytsia province).

On the basis of such comparisons we can make certain assumptions and generalizations with regard to the melodic types of wedding songs characteristic of an ethnic group.

Melodies recorded by Demchenko can be divided into two basic groups: ritual and non-ritual songs. To the latter group belong all those songs heard at the wedding which are not directly related to the ritual wedding drama. An analysis can be made of the melodies which fall into the ritual context and are distinguished by a single style.

All the ritual song melodies in Demchenko's recordings can be divided into two basic groups: lyrical, coloured with sorrow and sadness, and festive ones, brimming with triumphal jubilation. They are not equally represented. Of the 64 melodies, seven are lyrical, and 47 are festive. The rest are ritual, humorous or dancing songs.

The lyrical recordings have a characteristically large range, often surpassing an octave; they have a slow tempo, with a leaning toward the minor scales, with raised 7<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> degrees, the latter of which forms an augmented second with the third degree below the tonic, usually ending on the second degree of the scale. These melodies can be heard at the *divych-vechir*, when the wedding-tree is being put together, during the unbraiding of the bride's plait and the covering of her head with a kerchief. They are related to the dramatic parts of the wedding act, whereas for the song style of central Ukraine such melodies are an indispensable component. These characteristics/features are evident in the recordings made by Lysenko and Skaletsky.

The other group, dubbed festive songs, have a characteristic similarity in melodic and rhythmic devices. One of their common traits is a leaning toward an exalted major key and the frequent use of the pentachord.

The most often used melodic types of this group of songs are easily found in the recordings of I. Demchenko:

- a) Usually a 7, 8 or 9 syllable verse is put to music with a melody having the range of a pentachord. It often commences on the fourth or fifth degree (others are possible) and finishes on the tonic. For the metrorhythmic constructions it is characteristic to have a leaning toward a five beat system ( $5/4$  or  $3/4 + 2/4$ ) and also a six beat.
- b) Melodies within the range of a pentachord, beginning on the third degree and ending on the first. Time signature is  $3/4$ , with typical rhythmic figuration, in which the first and second-last rhythmic value is fractionated.

- c) Melodies which proceed like those in “a”. They begin on the fifth, touching a third of the lower octave, falling to the second degree with the rest of the melody, continuing in a major sounding mode.
- d) Melodies similar to type “a”, where the first phrase begins in the major, with the fourth acting as the fundamental. After the repetition of the first phrase there is a rising movement to the seventh degree, and then a falling movement reaching the third degree of the lower octave, finishing on the second degree (Phrygian cadence, as described by F.Ruhtsov).

Thus we see the opposite effect compared to the development of the former melodies. These begin in the minor and end in the major, while the latter begin in the major and end in the minor.

The last two types of melodies, which have been differentiated previously, are of type “a” and were most probably composed later because their modal structure is more complex. With regards to the first two types, they are much rarer. ...

The melodies collected by Demchenko have many similarities to those collected by Verkhovynets (also from Kyiv). Of the four types of “festive intonations” mentioned above, we only find two in the songs collected by Verkhovynets. The first is similar to those listed under “a”, the second is similar to those listed under “b”.

The difference of this type recorded by Verkhovynets lies in the metric structure, which is encased by introductory and cadential measures in 4/4. The recordings by Verkhovynets are characterized by a greater number of lyrical and mournful minor melodies, as well as the use of triple time. In Demchenko’s recordings these time signatures are not apparent, however in Lysenko’s recordings the triple time signatures formed in 9 or 12 measure groups are typical of all recordings.

On the southern border between Podillia and Odesa and especially moving northwest, triple time signatures become more common.

The recordings made by Demchenko and Verkhovynets display notable similarities to those made by Skaletsky (Mykhailivka village, Bershad District). These types of “lyrical” minor-sounding melodies are characterized by the same parameters as the earlier recordings, with the fourth and seventh degrees raised, highlighting the feeling of sadness in these melodies.

Here the most prominent melodies are those which begin with an interval of a minor sixth from the subquartatonium to the mediant of the scale. The first half of the song finishes in such melodies on the submedian, the second half on the lower dominant.

Such psychological impact can be seen in melodies which are in compound metrical (3/4) with flowing or wave-like movement in the melodic line.

The characteristics of the previously examined wedding ritual include the exploitation of melodies with major coloring, but with a preserved melancholic tone.

Of the four types of ritual intonations which have been earlier described, this wedding uses only two. The first is of type “a”, the second – type “b”. In the recordings of R.Skaletsky, this type constitutes the basis of the whole wedding. This type of melody is preserved in triple time (3/8) with somewhat changed stresses in the rhythmical development, however with unique intonational development. For example, in comparing #28 of Demchenko’s recordings with No. 3 from Skaletsky.

As we can see, both melodies have the same intonational structure, but in the second example it is as if the musical measure has come late by a quaver; because of this the sounds of the first recording fall on the unaccented beat of the bar, which in the second example fall on the strong beat. In this way there comes into play a transposition of the accents, but the melodic type stays the same.

The extreme northeastern area of recordings of wedding songs were made by P.Kolomyjchenko (texts) and V.Lashchenko and V.Dmytriyev (melodies) from Pokhory village in Borzensky District, Chernihiv region. The melodies of these records, compared to those mentioned earlier, especially those recorded by Demchenko, form a separate type. This is manifested by the use of small range melodies within the range of a third or fourth, which are not to be found in the earlier mentioned recordings.

The compass of a fourth can be found as the basis for the majority of melodies from this sample (close to 85%). This can be explained by the proximity of Russia, where song styles contained within a fourth are common, secondly in the Chernihiv region the wedding rituals have preserved some of the oldest, most archaic songs and music which has its roots in pre-Slav song culture; thirdly these recordings lie between declamatic-recitative?? Linguistic intonations and melodic song elements.

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter compiled and translated by Victor Mishalow, edited by Yuri Tkacz