

## Performing National Identity in Diaspora:

Music, Dance, Ballet, and Vaudeville

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### **Do Not Cite Without the Permission of the Author**

This paper examines four figures who staged national-cultural identity in the twentieth-century Ukrainian diaspore. It is based partly on the archival holdings in Winnipeg's Oseredok.<sup>1</sup>

More than any other figure, Alexander Koshetz (Oleksander Koshyts, 1875-1944), a choral conductor of genius, brought Ukrainian music to the world stage. His tours made Leontovych's *Shchedryk* (Carol of the Bells) an international Christmas hit it is today. Born in Romashky, near Kyiv, into a priest's family, he grew up in the village of Tarasivka near Zvenyhora (next to Kyrylivka, Taras Shevchenko's birthplace) to which his family moved when he was two years old. He had four brothers and four sisters, all of whom were musical. Koshetz heard singing "from morning until night" (Koshyts 1947, 37). He attended a seminary school in which the embroidered shirt was taboo and teachers watched for "Little Russian" sympathies. Fortunately, they were unable to detect any "nationalism" in Mykola Lysenko's musical compositions, which Koshetz produced for his fellow students.

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<sup>1</sup> Oseredok (Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Centre), was founded by emigres from Ukraine and European cities in the 1940s. It houses Koshetz's archive, along with materials on Avramenko (although the latter's primary archive of 150 boxes is in the Library and Archives of Canada, Ottawa). Posters and publicity produced by Lewchuk and Pryma are also in the Oseredok archive. From 1941 Koshetz spent summers teaching in Winnipeg and in 1944 became Oseredok's curator. After his death his wife Tetyana worked as the curator.

After graduating from the Kyiv Theological Academy in 1901 he directed its choir. He brought a new appreciation of popular song and his arrangements of Artemy Vedel (1767-1808), a composer who had once been banned by the Church Synod, although initially met with criticism, soon became popular. Kyiv's elite began attending Sunday services in the Bratsky Monastery (in the Podol district) to hear the choir perform Koshetz's arrangements. Mykola Lysenko help him obtain a government position collecting Ukrainian folk songs in the Kuban region and in 1907 Koshetz was awarded the gold medal at an ethnographic show in Krasnodar for documenting over 500 songs (*ibid.*, 42). In 1908-10 he studied at Kyiv's Lysenko School of Music and Drama, taught choral music at the city's Imperial Conservatory of Music, and directed the Boyan choir until Archbishop Amvrosii (Vinnyskyi) removed him as a "Ukrainophile." From 1912 he conducted the orchestra for Mykola Sadovsky's theatre. This was the only permanent Ukrainian theatre in Kyiv and had been created after the imperial government removed the ban on Ukrainian performances in the city. Koshetz produced Lysenko's *Eneida*, *Utoplana* and *Rizdviana nich*. In the years 1909-17 he also directed Kyiv University's student choir of 80-120 voices, and in 1915-16 served as conductor and choirmaster for the Kyiv Opera, where he introduced the public to Ukrainian composers like Kyrylo Stetsenko and Mykola Leontovych.

In 1918 under Hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky's rule the Ukrainian Theatre of Drama and Opera, Ukrainian State Capella, State Ukrainian Symphony Orchestra, and Ukrainian Academy of Sciences were created. Shortly after the Directory of the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR) took power, Koshetz performed Mykola Leontovych's *Shchedryk* at a concert in Kyiv on 1 January 1919. Symon Petliura, one of the Directory's leaders, immediately asked Koshetz to form the Ukrainian Republican

Capella. The Paris Peace Conference was about to begin and the Capella was sent to perform in Europe as part of the UNR's cultural diplomacy.

Officially created on 25 January 1919 (a day before the Bolsheviks were expected to invade Kyiv), the Capella was a mixed choir of sixty voices. Its mission was to represent musical culture in Europe and by doing to draw attention to the independence struggle. At the Paris Conference, which began on 18 January 1919, Poland argued that Galicia should be part of its new state. It was conducting its own musical diplomacy through Ignacy Jan Paderewski, the pianist and composer who in 1919 became the new Polish state's prime minister.

The UNR's diplomats facilitated the Capella's appearances.<sup>2</sup> Brochures were printed with the lyrics of songs in Ukrainian and English or French translation. Biographies and photographs of Ukrainian composers were provided, together with foreign press reviews of performances, information on the UNR's nationalities policy and the independence struggle. Between 1919 and 1922 the choir performed some 230 concerts in 45 cities in 10 European countries. The first tour, from April 1919 to May 1921, visited Czechoslovakia, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, France, Belgium, Holland, Great Britain, Poland, and Spain. After changing its name to the Ukrainian National Chorus, the group performed in Europe again between October 1922 and May 1924.

Koshetz moved to New York in 1922 and in the same year gave a Christmas concert in Mexico City, which was attended by 32,000 people, including President

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<sup>2</sup> The Directory established five Ukrainian embassies abroad (Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, Turkey, Finland), seventeen diplomatic missions (Great Britain, USA, Belgium, Greece, Denmark, Estonia, Italy, Poland, Romania, Hungary, France, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, Switzerland and the Caucasus), and six consulates (Berlin, Munich, Gdansk, Riga, Batum, Baku) (Matiash 2011), 19.

Alvaro Oberhon. In 1923 his choir toured South America (Argentine, Uruguay and Brazil), and then between 1923 and 1927 made three tours of North America.<sup>3</sup>

Overcoming postwar anarchy and disruptions from political opponents, the original Capella enjoyed enormous success.<sup>4</sup> Its first, sensational performance took place on 10 May 1919 in Prague's National Theatre. After singing the Czech, Slovak, and Ukrainian anthems, it performed religious songs, carols, *shchedrivky*, folk songs, and compositions by Lysenko. Koshetz made many of the musical arrangements.

The historian Dmytro Doroshenko wrote: "The success was total and there was no end to the applause" (Doroshenko 1969, 457). Mykhailo Hrushevsky attended the second concert. Professor Zdenek Nejedly of Charles University was so enthusiastic that he followed the group to every performance and wrote a book on Ukrainian song and music. In it he described the polyphonic nature of the folk songs, the way voices blended and contrasted (Koshyts 1952, 75-76). He noted the unusual melodies of religious songs (*kanty*) in the arrangements of Leontovych and other composers, and the originality of Ukrainian choral music as an art form.<sup>5</sup> Ironically, at that moment of triumph the

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<sup>3</sup> The first North America tour was from 5 October 1923 to 26 September 1924 and gave 135 concerts; the second from 25 October 1923 to 7 May 1924 gave 147 concerts; and the third from 17 October 1926 to 10 January 1927 gave 289 concerts. The South American tour from 3 June to 26 September 1923 gave 107 concerts, 53 in Buenos Aires. See Oseredok (Ukrainian Cultural and Educationa Centre), Koshetz archive, tom 14, Rukopys "Ukrainska Respublikanska Kapelia, Shchodennyk, Persha chastyna," 148-49; and tom 15 "Druha chastyna," 81-135.

<sup>4</sup> When the group first travelled west to Uzhhorod, the Moscowophile priests, who saw their mission as Russifying Ukrainians, commented sarcastically on the Ukrainian language and culture (Koshyts 1952, 47). In Paris a provocation was planned by members of the Russian White emigration, who were ready to shout and whistle when singing of the Ukrainian anthem began. They then arranged for a speaker to rise and to propose that everyone leave the hall because the concert was being given by separatists enemies of the "one and indivisible Russia," who were therefore enemies of France. However, the police had learned of the planned scandal and averted it (*ibid.*). In Berlin the Russian White emigration caused scandals and caused violent incidents (Oseredok, Koshetz fond, tom 14, "Rukopys, druha chastyna."

<sup>5</sup> Many of these favourable reviews were published in a brochure entitled *Ukrajinska republikanska kapela* (Prague 1922). According to Symon Narizhnyi, the most popular pieces were Leonotvych's arrangements of *Kant pro Matir Bozhu Pochaiivsku*, *Shchedryk*, *Oi, priadu, priadu*, *Vesnianky*, *Kupalni pisni*, *Koliadky*, *Openky*, *Cherevychky*; Koshetz's arrangements of *Na vulytsi skrypka hraie*, *Oi, u poli Baryshpoli*; and Vasyl Barvinsky's lullabye *Oi, khodyt son* (Narizhnyi 1942, 32).

Polish army of General Józef Haller, which had been trained and equipped by the French, in contravention of the negotiated ceasefire agreement broke through the lines of the Ukrainian Galician Army, thus providing Polish negotiators at the Paris Conference with a strong negotiating position.

Nonetheless, many dignitaries who attended the concerts were impressed – artistically and politically. In Brussels, when Queen Elizabeth of Belgium and her ministers attended a benefit concert for children’s charities in March 1920, she informed Koshetz that “all her sympathies” were with his people and she knew about their “difficult struggle to gain freedom.” The guest book was signed by her ministers, including Paul Giessman, a supporter of indivisible Russia (Narizhnyi 1942, 27; quoted in Peresunko 2016a, 100). Some of the Flemish public, which was demanding language rights in Belgium, called the Ukrainian concerts “a lesson in national awareness” and urged the own government to popularize its own songs abroad in a similar way (TsDAVOU, f. 1429, op. 2, spr. 37, ark. 21; quoted in Peresunko 2016a, 99).

Other fans included the daughter of French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, the Princess de Polignac, who was a patron of Ravel and Stravinsky. Isadora Duncan, whose troupe contained several dancers born in Kyiv, invited Koshetz for tea and expressed an interest in choreographing the *vesnianky*, pre-Christian, springtime ritual dances (Martynowych 2014, 15). The list of admirers also included Germany’s President Friedrich Ebert, Sir Bernard Pares of the University of London, and Lord Aberdeen, who had served as Canada’s Governor General during the 1890s (ibid., 16).

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The reviews focused on the originality of Ukrainian folk songs and the choir's artistry. The Czech composer Jaroslav Křička wrote that Ukrainians differed from Russians in song as in everything else (June 1919; quoted in Peresunka 2016a, 95). A Berlin newspaper wrote on 7 April 1920: "The character of these songs is different from the Russian. The Ukrainian song also uses a lot of minor tones, but does not have the fatalistic pessimism of Russians. It is lively, full of determination, optimism. In the music there is something refreshing, strong, affirming. In it one hears love, struggle, joy of life." This reviewer sensed in the music a people's "drive for freedom from centuries of oppression. And if song was a state, then Ukraine would yesterday have taken first place among peoples" (Koshyts 1952, 180). This was of course music to the ears of Ukrainian politicians. It was also a contribution to a century-long discourse. Ever since Mykhailo Maksymovych published his *Malorosiiskie pesni* (Little Russian Songs) in 1827, the presentation of Ukrainian songs and national traits as unequivocally more attractive than Russian had been part of academic and popular debates, with the Russian spirit typically described as submissive and despondent and the Ukrainian as defiant and freedom-loving (Bojanowska 2017, 232).

Vienna critics compared Ukrainian with Russian songs in this way. Russian songs were described as more prone to "lamentation," Ukrainian were seen as cheerful and optimistic, something that was attributed to "the influence of strong political events" and the inspiration of "old ritual songs, ballads and dances" (ibid., 98-99). Vienna newspapers wrote of an authentic musical language, the "sound of the past, the artistic presentation of the country's image" (ibid., 97). This too was a contribution to a long discourse. According to the romantic nationalism of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), folk traditions were an expression of the national soul, and Ukrainians, who were

thought to possess one of the richest, most ancient and authentic folklores, would usher in the dawn of a new Slavic civilization (Bojanowska 2017, 230).

A persistent theme among reviewers was the sense that they had suddenly discovered a nation with its own voice, culture, and identity (Koshyts 1952, 69). The praise of originality and artistry therefor contained a strong political subtext. In England a reviewer for the *Sketch* commented on 11 February: “For a musical person their appeal is overpowering. Not believing in new nations who have emerged after the war, I listened to the concert with very mixed feelings, but in the end I was completely convinced in the justice of their national struggle, in large part emotionally” (ibid., 158). The *Saturday Review* on 14 February 1920 wrote: “The Ukrainian choir accomplished its mission. It forced us to look into the character of its nation, its customs and traditions, religious feelings, the innocence of its life and thinking” (ibid., 159).

Koshetz was pleased to have created a positive image: “My thoughts and dreams, over which I had cried many nights when my soul sang my native, tender, sad and glorious melodies, had not deceived me. With the voice of a saintly purity and heavenly artistic truth our song had resounded in the wide world; it had arisen great, mighty, life-giving, like the eternal sun! And before it, like an electric light, everything artificial in art, everything insincere that Europe and the so-called cultural world was filled with had been extinguished and been thrust into darkness” (ibid., 115). This statement captures not only the Ukrainian desire for national recognition and cultural acceptance, but what Tamara Hundorova has described as “postcolonial melancholic resentment” against a Europe that favours the strong against the weak (Hundorova 2008, 103).

Newspaper comments repeatedly express curiosity about what they took to be an extraordinarily talented people whose life was unlike that of urbanized Western

Europeans. One Swiss newspaper wrote on 17 October 1919: “It would be interesting to know whether the Ukrainian people also sings the songs in this [sophisticated] manner ... or whether they are only adapted in this manner to the concert hall. If the Ukrainian people really creates such works of art, we are faced with the appearance of a phenomenon” (Koshyts 1952, 119). After the concert in Toulouse on 22 January 1920 the director of the conservatory commented: “Our Mme. Geography, what did you teach us? You said Ukraine was a pasture and herds, herds and pastures ... and failed to tell us there is a people there with such a spirit, such a song” (ibid., 130). In Antwerp one paper lamented “We hardly know this land: even one hundred of the thousands of listeners could not give any real information about Ukraine. Today it exists, but what will be the case tomorrow? A difficult struggle is under way there now. And many dangers threaten this young nation unfortunately” (ibid., 147-48). The reviewer compared the choir’s tour to a crusade. Through song alone it had produced “a triumph, something wonderful and pleasing for everyone who sympathizes even a little with the rights of every subjugated people” (ibid., 148).

In Amsterdam on 25 January a reviewer commented: “A new world has opened before us. A strong, talented race lives somewhere in a corner of Europe almost forgotten by us and cannot be itself” (ibid., 150-51). A review in *Ons Vaderland* from 11 January 1920 commented on Symon Petlyura: “This military man, who is concerned with the liberation of his country from the yoke of Bolsheviks and tsarists, knows how to do more than fight. He knows that the sword alone is not enough to gain the sympathies of the Western European world for his homeland. He introduces us to the art of his country. Ukraine, the country of Black Earth, the homeland of Gogol, is now becoming



for us the land of song. Petliura is internationalizing the Ukrainian question through song” (Peresunko 2016a, 91).<sup>6</sup>

How much lasting effect this cultural diplomacy had is questionable. Decades later in September 1998 President Jacques Chirac of France during a meeting with Ukraine’s Foreign Minister Anatolii Zlenko confused Ukrainian and Russian folk songs, thinking that some melodies with which he was familiar were Ukrainian when they were in fact Russian (Zlenko 2003, 204; quoted in Peresunko 104).

However, the enthusiastic reception was genuine. Koshetz commented that in Geneva and Berne, his personal arrangement of the Marseillaise caused a stir: “Ladies jumped from their seats and in ecstasy broke their umbrellas against the stage. In Berne after the concert, when I got into the car, a wreath as big as myself was pulled into it, students threw flowers and ran shouting after the automobile all the way up to the hotel” (Koshyts 1952, 113). By appealing to emotions, the artistry made cultural and political messages convincing. In Basel one newspaper wrote: “Nothing can compare with the ability of this choir to produce sudden ‘crescendos’ and ‘diminuendos’, its control over this latter, its ability to give accents to separate tones” (ibid., 121). Another Basel paper wrote on 14 October 1919 that the voices matching one another “like the colours of a noble, harmoniously composed mosaic,” of “a solemn, luxuriously rich sound, a sophistication and purity of all the voices in all positions and on levels of tonal power, in

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<sup>6</sup> Her sources for many of the reviews in Western newspapers are from the UNR press bureau in The Hague, the archive of which is now in the TsDAVO in Fond 1429. She also mentions that in the TsDAVO a separate fond 3965 ia devoted to the Ukrainian Republican Capella, which contains documents, advertisements, correspondence, librettos and newspapers reviews from the choirs tour of Europe in 1919-21 and of the Americas in 1922-24.

the lowest ‘piano’ and the most powerful ‘forte,’” of “a wonderfully beautiful gradation in dynamics,” all of which the reviewer called “without parallel” (ibid., 116).

All reviewers praised the technical aspects of the performance and many compared the choir to an orchestra. They were also charmed by what they considered innovations. Koshetz directed without a baton, and apparently set a new trend among choir directors (*Vidhuky* 1954, 147). Singing without notes was also considered a novelty. Koshetz’s motto was: “Words and notes have to be in the head, and not the head in the notes” (Korsun 2009). It reflected his desire to bring a new sensibility to choral performance, the ability “not simply to sing, but to feel” the music (Koshyts 1947, 48). By demanding enormous discipline of his singers, he was able to achieve an entire range of effects in rhythm and intonation, which were controlled at all time by the director and which the audience experienced as wizardry. He also focused on the beauty of sound, and was known for blowing kisses to his singers when they captured the effect he sought.

At the end of the memoir in which he describes the first European tour Koshetz articulates both the romantic idea of nation and the political drive behind that inspired him. He does so by quoting Robert Prechtl’s review in the Berlin *Vossische Zeitung* from 29 May 1920: “Folklore is the art of a people! Its roots are in unknown depths, in long dead tribes whose songs have been passed down through tradition from generation to generation. And have now reached the heights of art and skill. [...] But as I wandered home, a second question arose before me: why are we, Germans, who have such a rich folklore, not able to create such a choir? [...] Such a German choir could travel from city to city and move our people from the desert of material interests that have devoured it back to the fresh sources of the German spirit” (ibid., 192). “The Ukrainian people was subjugated; for centuries it was kept in captivity, but what treasures from the past it

nonetheless prides itself on! What faith in its future, in its renaissance! And all that is embodied in its folk songs. A people lives as long as its national art lives” (ibid., 194). The choir succeeded in its cultural diplomacy by demonstrating a high art of great originality. It produced many imitators and made choral performance an identity marker and calling card for a host of diaspora communities.

**Vasyl (Vasile) Avramenko (1895-1981)** was inspired by Koshetz’s success, which he tried to repeat in the realm of choreographed folk dance. He first took to the stage in Western Ukraine, then gained fame touring Europe and North America. By showcasing dances and costumes from different regions of Ukraine, he conveyed a message of unity within diversity. He also worked to repair relations with Jewish communities that had been devastated after the pogroms of 1919. At that time the UNR government was attempting to restore the prewar Ukrainian-Jewish rapprochement. Avramenko’s contribution was the dance *Hore Izrailia* (Woe of Israel), which showed the suffering of Jews and Ukrainians as stateless nations. He first performed it in Lviv and Lutsk in 1923 and then made it part of his repertoire. It was part of his concert in New York’s Metropolitan Opera House in 1931 and the Chicago World’s Fair in 1933. He also performed it at Jerusalem’s Wailing Wall in 1978 a few years before his death.

Avramenko’s first major concert was in the Ukrainian prisoner of war camp in Kalisz, Poland, on 24 May 1921. Koshetz had gone to the camp to recruit voices for his Capella and recorded his impressions: “At first boys dressed as Cossacks came out and began moving about the stage using some special steps. It was boring because there seemed nothing in this gymnastics, [...] but when the real dances began I understood that the elements composing our dance had first been shown and then the dance itself. The analytic-synthetic method became clear. [...] Every step, pose, movement spoke of

the historical tradition of a great, free, proud people, so determined in battle, so tender and turbulent in love, so cheerful and humorous in daily life ..." (Pidhuliak 1979, 20-21). Koshetz was familiar with Sadovsky's staging of Ukrainian village life and its dances, but he had not until then considered the "grammar" of dance. Avramenko's choreography made him see dance in a new way: "It seemed to me that I was dreaming a strange dream which transported me to where I had once been before, that I saw again that which I had looked at earlier and had not seen, had not noticed, -- and I wanted this dream not to end, I wanted to see more and more" (ibid., 21). In Koshetz's interpretation, Avramenko was developing a deeper understanding of a popular art form in the same way as Koshetz himself was doing: "In order to adequately assess this new phenomenon it is not enough to be a ballet master, one has to know the soul of the new phenomenon, its history, its song, its life and not only its past but also sense its future, because this is 'art for art' and not simply an expression of muscular energy, it is not entertainment, no – it is the emotional reflex of the whole people's spirit as manifest in movement" (ibid., 21).

The future painter Halyna Mazepa was also at the time in Kalish, where her mother taught medicine. As a child Halyna enjoyed the camp full of attractive young men in colourful uniforms, who marched off to their lectures, reviews and meetings. She viewed Avramenko as "a choreographic genius" who left "printed rules for steps, music and clothing for dances: the historical, the *chumak* dance, the Carpathian outlaw, the arkan, the girls' dance *Kateryna*, the Zaporozhian dance with swords, and others that were described in his textbook" (Mazepa 1993, 27).

Avramenko was born in Stebliv, a large agrotown south of Kyiv with 5,750 inhabitants, a quarter of whom were Jewish. It had a beet plant, refinery, cloth factory,

steel mill, cast iron foundry, six water mills, many windmills, an Orthodox church, a Roman Catholic chapel, five synagogues, two one-room schools and thirteen taverns (Martynowych 2014, 5). The writer Ivan Nechui-Levytsky was born and raised there. Since libraries, books, and education in Ukrainian was banned under imperial rule, stage productions were often the only form of Ukrainian cultural expression.

In 1917 Avramenko met Petliura, who was at the time the Central Rada's general secretary for military affairs. Avramenko asked to resume his military service, but Petliura suggested that he could do more for Ukraine as an artist than a soldier. Avramenko enrolled in the Lysenko School of Music and Drama, where he attended lectures by Mykola Sadovsky, the art historian Dmytro Antonovych, the writer and critic Liudmyla Starytska-Cherniakhivska, and the choreographer Vasyl Verkhovynets, "the first serious student of the Ukrainian folk dance" (ibid., 11). Verkhovynets had transformed Ukrainian folk dancing into a performing art.<sup>7</sup> A recognized authority on the subject, he had studied dances from various regions of Ukraine and had published *Ukrainske vesillia* (Ukrainian Wedding, 1912), a description and analysis of Ukrainian wedding rituals. He soon afterwards published *Teoriia ukrainskoho narodnoho tantsiu* (Theory of the Ukrainian Folk Dance, 1919), "the first and most important textbook on the subject" (ibid., 12). Verkhovynets introduced elements of classical ballet into folk dance and choreographed them for the stage. He inspired the first professional folk

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<sup>7</sup> Born near Stanislaviv (Ivano-Frankivsk), his real name was Vasyl Kostiv. He studied voice at the Kraków Conservatory of Music, then joined the Ukrainian Ruska Besida Theatre as an actor-singer and choral director shortly before Mykola Sadovsky and Maria Zankovetska came to Lviv in 1905. When Sadovsky moved back to Kyiv, he invited Kostiv (stage name Verkhovynets), and the two men collaborated on several operas, including Moniuszko's *Halka* in 1909, to which Verkhovynets introduced the *arkan*, a previously unknown highland warrior dance. Verkhovynets worked in Sadovsky's theatre until 1915, then joined the new company of Saksahansky, Zankovetska and Marianenko as musical and choral director and choreographer (Martynowych 2014, 11-12).

dance ensembles in Soviet Ukraine and Russia before falling victim to Stalin's terror (ibid., 13).

Avramenko was in Stanislaviv when the UNR government retreated westwards in 1919, but decided to remain in Soviet-occupied Ukraine in 1919-20. After the Bolsheviks executed his friends, he crossed the border to Polish occupied Galicia and joined Mykola Sadovsky's theatre group, which in February 1921 visited the interned soldiers in the Kalisz camp (Knysh 1966, 22). Here Avramenko established a dance school for 100 soldiers, officers, their wives and children. He used Verkhovynets' *Teoriia* as a textbook. Eschewing the "wild outcries and whistling typical of village boys," he concentrated on lightness, grace and elegance in movement, demonstrating in this way that folk dance could express a range of human experiences and emotions (Knysh 1966, 23-24). On 22 July Petliura and his officers attended a performance called *Za Ukrainu* (For Ukraine), which commemorated the recent struggle against the Bolsheviks (Martynowych 2014, 14). On 30 August there was a special performance for Józef Piłsudski, the Polish head of state, who visited the camp with Petliura.

Avramenko wanted to see dance "fashioned into one harmonious whole, both technically and artistically" (Avramenko 1927, 40). He was convinced that when dance was collected and presented in artistic form it was a valuable tool for raising national awareness among people.

He moved to Kraków, worked for a while in Polish cabarets, then created a group in Lviv and began performing in eastern Galicia, Volhynia, Chełm (Ukr: Kholm) and Brest-Litovsk (Martynowych 2014, 18). Between December 1922 and July 1923 he gave over 65 performances and organized schools in Lutsk, Rivne, Kremianets, Aleksandriia and Mezhyriche (Knysh 1966, 38-39). A performance in Rivne in May 1923 featured the

solo dances *Gonta* and *Hore Izrailia*, which then became part of his repertoire (Knysh 1966, 39). In November 1924 he performed in Stryi, Przemyśl (Ukr: Peremyshl), Stanislaviv (today's Ivano-Frankivsk), Kolomyia, Deliatyn, Ternopil, and Drohobych. After being arrested by the Polish police for a third time, he crossed the border to Czechoslovakia and opened a dance school for refugees and veterans of the Sich Riflemen in Prague's old Jewish quarter of Josefov (Martynowych 2016, 20). Olena Teliha and her husband Mykhailo Teliha were among his students and performed in Poděbrady (Knysh 1966, 42-43).

In 1925, after meeting two Winnipeg residents, the Presbyterian minister Revn. Pavlo Krat (Paul Crath) and the founder of the Sokil Batko athletic society Ivan Bobersky, Avramenko moved to Canada, first to Toronto, then Winnipeg. In 1927 he again crossed paths with Koshetz in Winnipeg, where the latter was completing a tour. In that year the Ukrainian National Chorus disbanded and several members joined Avramenko's first tour of Western Canada (Martynowych 2014, 37). From 1928 he lived in the USA for five years.

Throughout his life Avramenko saw himself as a cultural ambassador for the Ukrainian cause. He provides a contrast to Koshetz, however, in that his mission became the providing a patriotic education to every child in the diaspora, creating good Ukrainians out of prairie-born Ukrainians. His concerts began with a brief patriotic speech on Ukraine, and his classes with stories about brave Cossack deeds or how they improvised the *hopak* at the Zaporozhian Sich. He described his work as part of a struggle to preserve traditional identity and to liberate Ukraine (Martynowych 2014, 21).

He taught 10-12 dances from different regions of Ukraine, thus emphasizing the idea of a collective identity, a single but multifaceted community with a common

aspiration.<sup>8</sup> He always wore a costume from the central (Kyiv) region, refused to adopt Western dress and encouraged Ukrainians to love their “superior native attire” (ibid., 67). Both costume and dance were for him part of the resistance to assimilation. A number of emigre leaders who feared assimilation appreciated this message. The Protestant Ukrainian pastor Ivan Bodrug felt that Avramenko had been sent by God to Canada “to prevent the Ukrainian spirit from drowning in the great English sea” and to renew the spirit of Ukraine among immigrants (ibid., 45). By the mid-twenties, 60 percent of the community had been born in Canada and many were losing fluency in the language. Dance therefore provided a vehicle for strengthening a sense of identity and for developing community spirit at a time when many felt that mass culture was providing a threat -- through radios, cinema, jazz, flappers, short dresses, and make-up (ibid., 48-9).

Avramenko’s example led to the institutionalization of Ukrainian folk dancing throughout North America. During the 1920s and 1930s he and his instructors trained and motivated countless dancers, many of whom developed professional careers. He produced eighteen ensemble choreographies. Later in life he was criticized for codifying dance and resisting experimentation, and after the Second World War for failing to compete with the standards established in Soviet Ukraine by dance masters such as Pavlo Virskyi. However, Avramenko’s great achievement was in popularized dance among youth. Simultaneously, he provided the pedagogical tools for a patriotic

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<sup>8</sup> The *velykodnia hahilka* (an Easter ritual for girls), *kozachok podilskyi* (a Cossack courtship dance), *kolomyjka* (a Carpathian highland dance) for couples, *Zhuravel* (a wedding dance for couples), *kateryna* (a salon dance from Kherson), *hopak kolom* (for couple, Kyiv region), *zaporozhkyi hertz* (a Cossack sword dance), *hrechanyky* (a couples dance from Central Ukraine), *zhenychok* (a spring dance for small girls, imitating flight of bird), *metelytsia* (a couples dance depicting a winter storm), *honyviter* (a Carpathian dance for girls evoking a whirlwind), *chumachok* (a dance of the Black Sea salt traders).



education. His aim was not a high art, but a democratic one. There were for a time as many children in Ukrainian folk dancing groups on the prairies as playing hockey. Moreover, these dance classes broke the gender hierarchy. They allow both young men and women an attractive form of artistic expression. Many young women in particular went on in postwar years to refine dance and to turn it into a sophisticated form. They frequently came out of Avramenko's schools.

Avramenko's success had an extraordinary impact. At the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto in August and September of 1926 he performed in front of 25,000 people (ibid., 29). One reviewer commented that he got Ukrainians in Canada dancing "like one great nation-wide ballet" (ibid., 2). Throughout the 1920s every major Canadian newspaper gave him positive press coverage and in the later 1920s both Avramenko and Koshetz were courted by Soviet Ukrainian authorities, who offered them the opportunities to work in Ukraine.

Most emigres were thrilled by the performances. After his show in New York at the Star Casino *Svoboda* on 29 May 1929 wrote: "Avramenko's cause is our national cause, part of the struggle, a war of national liberation" (ibid., 59). He staged a mass spectacle of about 400 performers at the Metropolitan Opera Theatre in New York on 25 April 1931 and then at the Chicago World's Fair Civic in 1933. However, his impact on the North American entertainment industry was negligible. Although reviews in mainstream newspapers spoke politely of his work as reflecting a naïve, spontaneous, village culture, the "propaganda" effect for the Ukrainian cause was limited. Because he lacked business acumen, he was frequently in debt during the 1930s and by 1937 all his dance schools in the USA had folded.

In the late 1930s he produced films. His *Cossacks in Exile*, which premiered in Winnipeg on 3 December 1938, was the first full-length motion picture opera by an all-Canadian company (Martynowych 2014, 2). Together with the director Edgar G. Ulmer, he produced *Natalka Poltavka*. Both films provided competition for the eponymous Soviet versions directed by Ivan Kavalieridze. Despite drawing crowds, they were not financially rewarding. Moreover, many in the Ukrainian community thought he should have avoided the temptation of Hollywood, “where the dollar was the measure of everything” (Knysh 1966, 77). Those who expected devotion to a high art felt that the film industry had put an end to his creative career (ibid., 78).

Nonetheless, in Canada Avramenko succeeded in bringing a unique aspect of Ukrainian culture into the mainstream. Orest Martynowych has offered the following assessment of his career:

By the time he left Canada in 1928, Ukrainian folk culture, particularly Ukrainian folk dancing, which had been the object of much opprobrium, was being celebrated as a pastime capable of upholding rather than destroying British and Canadian moral standards. At the same time, as folk dancing and the folk arts became the most important component of Ukrainian heritage connecting large numbers of young Ukrainian Canadians to their roots and to the ethnic community, Ukrainian-Canadian identity became synonymous with Ukrainian folk culture. This was an ambivalent legacy at best, one that not only stereotyped Ukrainian Canadians but also helped to straitjacket and constrict Ukrainian-Canadian cultural expression, especially in the prairie provinces” (ibid., 151).

Avramenko transformed Ukrainian dance into a respected art form. In doing so he allowed Ukrainian Canadians to develop a unique, widely admired form of cultural

expression. Although he was less successful in drawing attention to the political struggle of Ukrainians, this inevitably formed the subtext of many performances. He was criticized because already in the 1920s in both the emigration and in Soviet Ukraine the pursuit of artistic excellence was viewed as a national imperative.<sup>9</sup> Avramenko's performance of national identity was therefore viewed with ambivalence: as a successful in popularization, but as simultaneously an abandonment the pursuit of excellence.

**Roma Pryma (Pryma-Bohachevsky) (1927-2004)** was born in Przemyśl, studied and performed modern dance in interwar Lviv, and after the war became the most important exponent of modern dance in the Ukrainian emigration. She developed her own choreographies and gave solo performances throughout Europe, North and Central America.

Her mother was the Lviv pianist and singer Ivanna Shmerykovska-Pryima, who in interwar years hosted musical evenings at which many musicians performed. Her godfather was the singer Mykhailo Holynskyi. At five she began attending a Delacroze school and then the school of M. Bronevska, a student of Mary Wigman. In 1944 Pryma moved to Vienna and graduated from the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts under Greta Wisenthal and became the prima ballerina in the State Theatre of Innsbruck.

Pryma met the dancer and choreographer Harald Kroizberg, and under his influence began interpreting music in a new way: "She moved from external form to inner essence, into the spirit of dance. Dance ceased for her to be merely movement within the frame of music, but became a language and every movement a word. Roma sensed that her talent would find its most sincere expression in dramatic-theatrical

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<sup>9</sup> For example, the leading prose writer in Ukraine during the 1920s, Mykola Khvylovy, had railed against a culture of *svystopliaska*, *hopako-shrovariushchyna* (song and dance, hopak and Cossack pants) and the undemanding *Satana v bochtsi* (Satan in a barrel) farce that played to the lowest common denominator.

dance. In that transitional period she created some of her best, expressive dances, such as *Horror of War* to the music of Chopin, *Sacred Dance* to the music of Debussy, *Mamona* to the music of Baltarovich” (Pasternakova 1964, 185). She took this program on tour to Switzerland, Canada and the USA.

After moving to New York she visited the classes of Martha Graham, Dorris Homefrey, Agnes Demill, Jose Limon and others, and in the 1950s and early 1960s gave recitals in Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Cuba. After visiting Istanbul she produced *Ikona* (Icon) into which she integrated Byzantine iconography. In the autumn of 1960 she performed her own work in London, Paris and Madrid, garnering positive reviews. Inspired by this success, over the next two years she prepared a program which made use primarily of Ukrainian themes, particularly elements of folk dance.<sup>10</sup> In 1962 she visited Europe with this program, appearing in Athens, Madrid, Geneva, Paris and Vienna (ibid., 180).

Some reviews described her technique as a “synthesis of classical ballet and folk dance,” while others spoke of her “expressive technique, which captures and fascinated the viewer” and praised her ability to unite “national-folkloric elements with the technically expressive methods of the Viennese school of H. Kreutzberg and the American school of M. Graham” (ibid., 184). The Paris *Le Guide du Concert* commented that her concert inspired by Ukrainian folklore was a “joy for the eye and spirit,” full of “youthfulness, joy and humour” that moved continually “like a rainbow” (ibid.). *Die Press* in Vienna noted her ability to keep the audience constantly interested and to “organically unite expressions of the body and mime games with classical elements of

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<sup>10</sup> The performances included *Chaika* (Seagull), *Rusalka* (Water Nymph), *Vidma* (Witch), *Verkhovyna* (Verkhovyna), *Svakha* (Matchmaker), *Oblyvanyi ponedilok* (Easter Monday), *Zhnytsia* (Woman Reaper), *Zhakhy viiny* (Horrors of War).

dance” (ibid.). The influence of Ukrainian history and folk traditions was mentioned frequently, together with her brilliant technique. Both were credited with producing a stylized, “magical” or fairy-tale world (ibid.).

She later appeared in Oslo and Helsinki, with a performance of *Joan of Arc* based on Jean Anouilh’s *L’Alouette*, and adaptation of Alexandre Dumas’ *La Dame aux Camélias*, and *Potiphara* based on Hugo von Hofmannstahl’s *Josephslegende*. European classics were frequently performed alongside Ukrainian pieces. In 1949, for example, Pryma’s program listed dances to the music of Petr Chaikovsky, Claude Debussy, Edvard Grieg, Frederic Chopin, Johann Strauss Jr., Volodymyr Baltarovich, and Semen Hulak-Artemovsky.

Later in life she created performances for the Syzokryli Ukrainian Dance Ensemble, interweaving ballet, modern, and stylized folk dance. One dramatic ballet commemorated the tragedy of Chernobyl and another celebrated the millennium of Christianity in Ukraine. Shortly after her death a number of her works were produced in a concert at New York’s Lincoln Centre.

Pryma came out of the interwar modernist movement that blended innovation with national uniqueness. This generation was familiar with jazz and cabaret, which were popular throughout Central Europe in the 1930s. Isadora Duncan and her sister Elizabeth had a studio in Prague, and several Ukrainian performers were developing modern dance in the city, blending liberated movements with traditional forms. They included Oleksandra Siropolko, who attended an Isadora Duncan school in Prague (led by Isadora’s sister Elizabeth).<sup>11</sup> Siropolko worked with the painter Halyna Mazepa, who

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<sup>11</sup> Oleksandra Siropolko in her article “Shkola Dunka” for *Nova Khata* (1935) she wrote “In the hall there are no longer any Greeek statues or cupids. Somewhere on a platform one can see the rosy bush of an apple tree. This minimal decoration already creates a mood, recalls spring, sun, the singing of birds, fills

captured her dances in her sketches.<sup>12</sup> Jacque Dalcroze's school in Hellerab near Dresden and in Geneva had been attended by a number of Ukrainians who used his method in musical and dance pedagogy.<sup>13</sup>

Several other women developed successful careers in modern dance at the time. Among them were Olenka Gerdan-Zaklynska, who appeared in Brussels in 1938 at a festival of dance, where she interpreted Ukrainian composers. She had begun in Poděbrady with Archipenko's school, then moved to Lviv to learn "revolutionary" dance. In 1939-44 she became part of the ballet ensemble of Lviv's Theatre of Opera and Ballet but did not favour classical ballet, and in 1944 entered the school of Rosalia Chladek in Vienna. She began appearing as a soloist in the DP camps in Austria and later she taught in Toronto and New York. Her repertoire included works on historical themes, such as *Plach Yaroslavny* (Yaroslavna's Lament) to the music of Mykola Lysenko, and the Wigman-inspired *Waltz* to the music of Povlinka.<sup>14</sup>

Among a host of other dance innovators, one might mention Dariia Nyzhankivska-Snihurovych, Daria Kravtsiv-Yemets, Oksana Vikul, Iryna Holubovska,

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one with joy, so pure that it borders on piety. Elizabeth comes to the school as though entering a temple and in fact the Duncan dance has in it something unearthly. She knows how to awaken in her students this remarkable feeling" (212).

<sup>12</sup> For the sketches see Pasternakova 209, 211. In her memoirs Mazepa describes painting theatre decorations for Ukrainian choreographers. Yelyzaveta Nikolska was Prague's prima ballerina at the time and when she asked Volodymyr Libovytskyi to create a ballet with Ukrainian dances, Halyna Mazepa prepared the costumes. Marusia Ihnatyshyn (Logush) was Mazepa's assistant and would explained to the Czech girls how Ukrainian girls danced: "without jumps, they ought to flow like peahens" (Mazepa 1993, 82-83). Later her paintings of these costume designs were purchased by a Russian impresario, who may have used them in his ballets (ibid., 83). At that time the Russian ballet was doing performances in Monte Carlo and Paris. Mazepa believed that her designs may have been used for these performances. She also at the time worked with a group that wanted to create Ukrainian animated film based on folk tales like "Ivasyk-Telesyk" (ibid., 100).

<sup>13</sup> Dalcroze's school was also used by Les Kurbas in Kharkiv's Berezhil theatre, especially in his productions of Georg Kaiser's *Gas*, in *Shpana*, and *Allo na khvyli 477*. Kropyvnytskyi had also used it in his *Vii*. The ballet directors in Berezhil were E. Vigilev, N. Shuvarska and A. Kupfer, who included the Dalcroze method in their lectures (Pasternakova 1964, 104)

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of her career see Marchenko 1956.

and Lusia Pavlychenko.<sup>15</sup> These were Roman Pryma's contemporaries, all of whom developed modern dance in combination with classical training. They also appeared before Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian audiences and often performed works with Ukrainian themes. It is particularly interesting that they were all women and were highly trained. Their attitude toward performance was sophisticated, as their choice of repertoire indicates, and they interpreted Ukrainian identity in creative ways that appealed to urban Western audiences who appreciated both classical and modern dance.

**Nicholas Paul Lewchuk (1896-1989)** pioneered vaudeville and circus performance in Canada. From the 1920s to 1960s he operated Canada's largest travelling show and midway, and under the stage name "Professor N.P. Lewchuk" delighted audiences for decades with magic, escape artistry, and comedy shows.

He billed his show "the first Ukrainian vaudeville and only travelling theatre in Canada" and produced posters that promised devils, ghosts, apparitions, and hypnotic charms. These entertainments were aimed both at Ukrainians in prairie settlements and at the general Canadian public. He and his wife Nellie (Anastasia) performed throughout Canada, but most often in the larger and smaller towns of Saskatchewan and

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<sup>15</sup> Nyzhankivska-Snihurovych attended the Lviv school of Oksana Sukhovska, which synthesized Duncan's dance with eurhythmics (Pasternakova 1964, 196). From 1936 she studied ballet with Mia Slavenska in Prague, then in 1939-44 worked in the Lviv Theatre of Opera and Ballet. After the war she performed in DP camps in Austria, and in 1950 moved to Winnipeg where she created a dance studio (ibid., 197). Kravtsi-Yemets also began dancing in Lviv where she took lectures in rhythmic-plastic dance. The artist Myron Levytskyi created a graphic representation of her choreography entitled *Ikony* (200). In 1939 she conducted recitals in Kraków, then after the war studied art history in Innsbruck and from 1950 taught dance in Winnipeg. Holubovska studied modern dance in Kraków, then completed the Vienna Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts. In the USA she taught dance in New York, Newark, Jersey City, and Philadelphia. Levytskyi produced an illustration for her dance *Venetsiia* (ibid., 116). Vikul attended one of Avramenko's schools in Podebrady, then studied dance in Prague and moved to the USA (ibid., 123-28).

Manitoba, where the population was often predominantly Ukrainian. In the 1940s he added midway rides and “freaks of nature” to his entertainments.

As a child Lewchuk showed a talent for observing and creating. He drew birds and animals, then developed an interest in photography and magic tricks. Later he started a printing business, constructed equipment, sold seeds, garden plants, lawn ornaments, and wedding and anniversary cakes – all produced according to his own designs. At the end of his life he built the statue in Canora, Saskatchewan, which was opened by the Governor General of Canada Edward Schreyer on 3 September 1980. It is 25-feet tall and depicts a woman in Ukrainian costume presenting the traditional welcoming gift of bread and salt. Today a museum in Yorkton, Saskatchewan, is devoted to Lewchuk’s memory. He received commendations from Ukrainian institutions, such as UVAN and the newspaper *Homin Ukrainy*, and letter from figures like the painter and cartoonist Yakiv Maidanek.

Lewchuk’s family was from the Buchach-Chortkiv region of Galicia.<sup>16</sup> He learned gardening skills and herbal recipes from his parents. The family emigrated to Canada when he was six years old, and farmed near Canora, Saskatchewan, which was part of the Ukrainian bloc settlement, in which traditions of food preparation, farming, music and building were all imported from Ukraine. Lewchuk learned to read and write in Ukrainian from the children of neighbours and subscribed to the newspapers *Kanadiiskyi farmer* (Canadian Farmer) and *Ukrainskyi holos* (Ukrainian Voice). He taught himself English from a Ukrainian-English dictionary purchased in Winnipeg.

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<sup>16</sup> His mother was from the village of Dzvenyhorod near Buchach and his father was elected deputy mayor of Svydiv near Chortkiv. Six of Nikolai’s sisters died of various congenious disease before they were six years old, which may have explained the reason for he family’s emigration.



When he began attending school at the age of nine, he already knew Ukrainian, Polish and some English. At the age of fourteen he bought a book on hypnotism and practiced on birds. Then in 1912 he purchased a Kodak camera and travelled around the region selling photos of families and farms, weddings, church gatherings, and formal portraits. He also developed an interest in trick photography. In 1914, when he saw a magician perform in Vegreville, he decided that this would be his profession.

“Probably,” he thought, “I’ll be the first Ukrainian professional magician in Canada!” (Lewchuk 1988, 85). He began by teaching tricks to his dog Dunay.

In the 1920s he belonged to the local Ukrainian Theatrical Organization, took an active role in plays, producing the scenery and doing make up for shows in Canora. His vaudeville acts were initially aimed at the Ukrainian public but then increasingly at English-language audiences.

This was the golden age of Ukrainian theatre in Canada, with hundreds of performances taking place across the country each year. Lewchuk began writing short dramas, monologues, dialogues, pantomines, songs and poems, which he then used in a vaudeville show. His team of performers first went on the road in 1920, with “two Stefaniuk girls” and an “Ewasiuk boy who was the son of a neighbor.” They studied their roles professionally. John Zihrul of Sifton was the advance booking agent and took part in some performances. They played across Saskatchewan and Manitoba to great acclaim, although there was trouble when a gang threw sticks of firewood on the roof of the hall in Stenen and interrupted the show: “We were told that such incidents often happened when Ukrainians performed their ethnic shows” (ibid., 145). He performed for over thirty years, visiting almost every prairie town and village with a Ukrainian population. The group performed in Winnipeg, Brandon, Dauphin, Regina, Saskatoon,

North Battleford, Edmonton, and Smoky Lake, in large theatres, small town halls, Ukrainian National Halls, school rooms and other venues, attracting large crowds every year. Their “Ukrainian Magic and Vaudeville Show” was the only travelling troupe in Western Canada.

They made their own equipment and props. Lewchuk created posters, first in Ukrainian, then added English “when need arose” (*ibid.*). Although the audiences were enthusiastic, some individuals were suspicious. Over the telephone party line Lewchuk overheard strange stories: “Some people claimed that they noticed a few black cats heading out to Gorlitz for our performances. Others claimed to have seen black devils in the hall, just under my magic table and walking between my legs during the performance. Still others were positive that they saw a large black object sitting on the hall chimney” (*ibid.*, 149). Small devils soon featured in his posters.

For one performance, Winnipeg’s Ukrainian Labour Temple was filled to capacity. The audience was mesmerized when Lewchuk played an ordinary carpenter’s saw with a mallet. As he produced various Ukrainian melodies the hall was so quiet “one could hear the buzz of a housefly” (*ibid.*, 151). In Winnipeg, the group covered all “political bases,” playing in the Prosvita Reading Hall, the Prosvita Hall, the Ukrainian Hall on Disraeli Street, the Ukrainian Labour Temple, and the National Home, each of which represented a different political orientation (*ibid.*, 153). Because he tried to appeal to the broadest possible public, Lewchuk continually added acts with broad appeal, including fire-eating, lock-and-chain escapes, music, songs, comedy, pantomime, juggling, and illusions. He designed midway rides in the early 1940s, which he patented and billed as “the first Ukrainian travelling midway” (*ibid.*, 216). They included an airplane, merry-

go-round, flying saucer, ferris wheel, and train. His show also featured performing dogs and a Ukrainian Cowboy named Matty Moroz, who played guitar and sang.

Lewchuk published a Ukrainian monthly *Nova Era* (New Era), through which he sold his products, including seeds from his own nursery (20,000 copies of the seed catalogue were produced), herbal teas and a salve for eczema. After he contracted a bad case of eczema in 1911, he bought a “miracle salve” that he found advertised in a Ukrainian newspaper and healed himself. He analyzed the salve, ordered the ingredients, made it himself, and sold it. He also printed posters, many in 1938 for the CCF (Cooperative Commonwealth Federation) the party that in 1961 became the NDP (New Democratic Party) (ibid., 197-98).

Lewchuk’s career is similar to that of other prominent show people of this era, all of whom had a restless drive, a knack for self-promotion, and a yearning for public recognition.<sup>17</sup> Both Avramenko and Lewchuk were pulled toward popular entertainment because the years before and after the First World War were the heyday of vaudeville and music hall entertainment, the age of Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, the Marx Brothers, Stan Laurel, W.C. Fields, and Fred Astaire. Winnipeg in 1927 was Western Canada’s largest city, the third largest in Canada, an important grain market, and one of the world’s great railway hubs. Its entertainment district had fourteen theatres and several motion picture palaces. As a result, the most successful London and New York stage shows visited the city, which was part of the main vaudeville circuit. The Marx

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<sup>17</sup> Among them were William “Buffalo Bill” Cody who founded the Wild West Show, the celebrity evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson, and the dance impresario Sol Hurok. The last, the son of a Jewish merchant from Kharkiv, came to the US in 1906 and became a successful dance impresario (Martynowych 2014, 153).

Brothers first saw Chaplin perform in Winnipeg in 1912, where they befriended the young British comedian (Martynowuch 2014, 31).

Although Koshetz and Pryma performed to more sophisticated audiences, the careers of all four individuals demonstrate a blend of political and personal motivation, artistry and entertainment, principled idealism and the need for box office proceeds. Each in their own way negotiated tensions between these different poles.

Koshetz and Pryma maintained high professional standards and were not primarily concerned with finances. They were highly respected and supported by community leaders and organizations. Pryma belonged to an interwar European generation that was highly educated and valued professionalism. However, like Koshetz she adapted her shows to a broad community; also like Koshetz she did not patronize or play down to the audience. By combining classics of world music with innovative modern dance techniques she provided a link between the classical and contemporary, and brought a modern idiom to Ukrainian-themed performances. The success of these two performers largely depended on audiences from the Ukrainian community, but their “messaging” went both ways: it introduced contemporary dance to Ukrainians and Ukrainian subjects matter to non-Ukrainians. The attempt to interest foreign audiences to a degree governent the adaptation to Western tastes, but the performances were also designed to challenge audiences with new content and presentations. At the same time the concerts and recitals aimed to please a discerning Ukrainian public that was upwardly mobile and wished to have its tastes validated.

Avramenko left a lasting legacy as a dance instructor and public performer. He not only attracted mass audiences but inspired future innovators. Although he himself was unable to institutionalize dance as a form of “high art,” he founded and maintained

a professional dance company, and brought a cultural education to thousands. His desire to educate youth was, perhaps, all along his primary motivation. Later generations of dancers, when funded, for example, by Canadian governments, did achieve a high level of professionalism. Their development would not have been possible without him. From a “backward” folk expression, Ukrainian dance did in fact become a high art, continues to evolve, and now regularly features on major stages, alongside ballet and other forms of modern dance.

Lewchuk perhaps best demonstrates a successful attempt to cross divides and to satisfy the need for popular entertainment. His show did not have lofty ambitions or express political goals, but he nonetheless played consciously to a Ukrainian public, especially in the early decades. Later he staged a “Ukrainian” vaudeville for the broad Canadian public – partly as an act of self-affirmation for prairie Ukrainians and partly for self-promotion. He was developing a business that found the assertion of national-cultural identity useful, for example by incorporating images of Shevchenko, folk recipes, demonology, songs and verse. As with Avramenko’s schools, this assertion validated the cultural distinctiveness of Ukrainians within Canada’s mosaic of groups. Lewchuk’s project was not linked to educating, edifying or instructing the community. His primary aim was to please and to sell products. However, in order to do so, he had to understand the local community’s psychology and tastes. His successes, like those of other performers, revealed much about popular taste.

The careers of all four performers provide insights into different sectors of the community and the ways in which a sense of identity was constructed in the diaspora.

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