

During the funeral of soldier Andriy Chepil, a well-known musician from the Ukrainian folk-rock band Koralli, as many as 13 trembitas sounded.

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Folk music (post)revival

in (re)invented Ukrainian military funerals

by **Inna Shvorak**

**A RESEARCH NOTE ON
WARTIME RITUAL PRACTICE**

abstract

This research note investigates the revival of Ukrainian folk music in the (re)invented military funeral rituals during the ongoing war on Ukraine. Since the 2022 full-scale invasion, elements of folk music – such as historical Cossack songs, the Carpathian trembita, and lullabies – have re-emerged in urban civic mourning, symbolizing national grief, resistance, and identity. Drawing on concepts of revival, postrevival, and (re)invention (Livingston, Bithell & Hill, Hobsbawm, Prickett), the article examines how these musical forms are recontextualized in response

to trauma and loss. Through three specific case studies, the article explores how Ukrainian folk music has been adapted to contemporary urban ritual settings and examines its role in shaping symbolic expressions of memory, resilience, and cultural continuity in wartime Ukraine. The study contributes to the broader discourse on the role of music in ritual transformation in the context of war and conflict.

KEYWORDS: Ukrainian folk music, revival, (re)invention of tradition, military funerals, wartime rituals.

“THE POST-2022 EMERGENCE OF FOLK MUSIC IN MILITARY FUNERALS – AS ILLUSTRATED THROUGH LULLABIES, HISTORICAL SONGS, AND THE CARPATHIAN TREMBITA – HAS RECEIVED LITTLE SCHOLARLY ATTENTION IN INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE.”

Since the beginning of Russia’s full-scale invasion in 2022, Ukrainian society has experienced profound transformations in its everyday life and cultural expression. A noteworthy development in recent ritual practice is the incorporation of folk music elements – particularly during military funerals – that had not been part of such ceremonies in the earlier phases of the war. In the context of Russia’s full-scale invasion, military funerals have become a daily reality across Ukraine. This increased visibility of funerals not only reveals the extent of national loss but may also help explain recent changes in how these ceremonies are structured and in the symbolic role of music within them. By *folk music*, I refer to rural musical genres rooted in traditional oral heritage – including lullabies, historical songs, and the use of folk instruments such as the trembita, kobza, horn, and drum.¹ While acknowledging these distinctions, I use the term *folk music* throughout this article to maintain clarity and consistency within the broader ethnomusicological discourse.²

This article explores how elements of Ukrainian folk music are being revived and reinterpreted within newly emerging military funeral traditions – civic-ritual ceremonies that first took shape during the 2014 Revolution of Dignity and have since expanded and taken on new forms and meanings following the full-scale invasion in 2022.³ These musical practices, once rooted in rural settings, now appear in unexpected urban spaces such as city squares and Christian churches. This shift not only relocates folk music into civic space, but also recontextualizes its traditional functions. Lullabies – originally performed in domestic, private settings – now serve as public expressions of a mother’s grief in the context of national mourning. The Carpathian trembita, once used to communicate across mountain landscapes, also served as a traditional funeral instrument in ritual contexts. Although this practice still exists sporadically in some Carpathian villages, it has largely disappeared from its original local setting. In contemporary military funeral ceremonies, the trembita reemerges as a symbolic sonic presence, reconnecting forgotten ritual functions with new civic meanings. Historical songs, which were rarely performed at military funerals before 2022, have gained greater prominence in public mourning, linking past national struggles and historical losses to the contemporary experience of war and grief.

TOGETHER, THESE reappearances of folk music in civic mourning settings reflect broader processes of cultural transformation in times of war. They raise critical questions about the role of tradition in shaping contemporary ritual. The central research

question guiding this study is: How are traditional Ukrainian folk music genres being revived and (re)contextualized within the emerging military funeral practices during the ongoing war?

More specifically, the article examines:

1. Which folk musical genres and instruments are being revived in funeral rituals?
2. How are these practices reshaped to reflect wartime experience and civic mourning?
3. What new meanings or ritual functions are assigned to these musical elements?

This article offers a conceptual contribution to the study of wartime ritual by drawing on theories of revival, (re)invention, and postrevival. By positioning the Ukrainian case within global discussions of folk revival, it opens space for comparative reflection and theoretical expansion. The post-2022 emergence of folk music in military funerals – as illustrated through lullabies, historical songs, and the Carpathian trembita – has received little scholarly attention in international literature. Moreover, within Ukrainian academic discourse, there has been almost no research that interprets these practices through the lens of revival theory or the concept of (re)invention. While earlier studies have examined the structural and symbolic dimensions in funerary ritual from both folkloristic and ethnographic perspectives,⁴ the conceptual framing of these practices as processes of ritual transformation remains largely absent – particularly within ethnomusicological analysis. This article introduces new material to international readers and advances a music-centered interpretive framework in Ukrainian scholarship, laying the groundwork for future empirical and comparative research.

Theoretical framework: (post)revival and (re)invention

Ukraine’s experience of a wartime folk music revival is not unique. Across various national contexts, folk traditions have served as tools of resilience, resistance, and identity-making during and after conflicts. In countries such as the United States, Germany, Croatia, and former Yugoslavia, scholars have explored how war influences folk music’s form and function.⁵ These cases underscore that folk music does not merely preserve tradition – it actively responds to trauma, ideology, and political upheaval.

Music has the power to ignite and resolve conflicts, foster therapeutic responses, or even serve as an instrument of violence.⁶ The relationship between music and war has been analyzed in a wide range of scholarly literature, including in the edited volume *Words, Music and Propaganda*, which documents



Chorea Kozacky, a music ensemble under the leadership of the famous Ukrainian singer and kobzar Taras Kompanichenko (center), perform during a farewell ceremony in Kyiv on March 10, 2023.

PHOTO: RUSLAN KANYUKA/UKRINFORM

examples of musical responses during conflicts, including the current war in Ukraine.⁷ Scholars note how song-making becomes a means of expressing patriotism, mourning, and collective resistance.⁸

IN THIS ARTICLE, I apply the concept of *folk music revival* using a multi-dimensional framework that includes revival as a cultural concept, a process of adaptation, and a vehicle for change. This understanding draws on the foundational work of Tamara Livingston, who analyzed revival movements as ideologically motivated and community-driven phenomena.⁹ In her model, revival typically involves a core group of revivalists, revivalist ideologies, original sources, organized events (e.g., festivals), and a surrounding market or institutional infrastructure. Livingston's emphasis on the intentional restoration of tradition in opposition to mainstream culture provides an important point of reference for understanding how wartime musical expressions in Ukraine connect to pre-existing folk practices (e.g., calendar and ritualistic songs, funerary laments (*holosinnia*),¹⁰ or Carpathian horn calls such as the *trembita* rooted in rural ritual and oral tradition).

Scholars such as C. Bithell and J. Hill have pointed out that the evolution of revivalist movements often leads to a *postrevival* stage.¹¹ This stage involves a shift in function, aesthetic, or context – for example, when musicians reinterpret tradition through cross-cultural influences, new technologies, or in new ritual spaces. In this phase, traditional forms are reimagined to convey meanings that resonate with contemporary emotions and political realities.

Recent studies in the English and Central European contexts propose alternative terms such as *resurgence*¹² or *postrevival*¹³ to

address phenomena that do not neatly fit Livingston's original criteria. These authors argue that in some cases, there is no need to "rescue" a dying tradition, no unified ideology, and no clear boundary between mainstream and folk culture – necessitating a new vocabulary for describing what is happening. The English case, for example, reflects a revival that is deeply entangled with popular culture and fragmented aesthetics, making it distinct from previous waves of structured revivalism. While postrevival emphasizes transformation after revival, *resurgence* highlights renewed activity where traditional elements remain, but revivalist ideologies no longer apply.

THE UKRAINIAN context opens new dimensions for understanding these processes. While in previous decades, Ukrainian revival movements were shaped both by Soviet-era staged folklore ensembles and post-independence efforts such as ethnographic expeditions, education, and folk festivals, concerts, and the development of ethno-rock or pop-folk genres, the use of folk music in military funerals after 2022 has gained particular prominence, genre diversity, and emotional depth. Although the origins of these practices date back to the Revolution of Dignity ("Euromaidan") – particularly the use of the folk song *Plyve Kacha po Tysyni* [The Duck Swims on the Tysa River] as a requiem during funeral processions honoring fallen activists and later, soldiers who fought in eastern Ukraine – the full-scale war has significantly expanded folk music scope, public visibility, and symbolic weight.

This broader folk revival in Ukraine of the past 20 years, while rooted in preservation, has also served as an expressive vehicle for asserting national sovereignty. Musicologist Maria Sonevytsky identifies a distinct aesthetic in this movement,

which she terms “wild music” – raw, unprocessed sounds that resist institutional standardization and evoke an authentic connection to rural tradition.¹⁴ Such sonic “wildness” became politically charged during the period between Ukraine’s two revolutions (2004–2014), reflecting a civil aspiration to break away from Soviet-era narratives and build a sovereign cultural identity. These expressions extended into global platforms: performances like Ruslana’s *Wild Dances* (2004) and Jamala’s *1944* (2016) at the Eurovision Song Contest channeled elements of folk music.¹⁵ These acts combined folkloric vocal styles and political narratives to signal Ukraine’s distinct cultural path. Rather than polished folkloric showcases, these were acts of cultural defiance, communicating political trauma and historical memory through symbolically loaded sound and performance. Thus, the same “wild” energy that animates military funeral music today can be understood not as aesthetic primitivism, but as part of a broader continuity of cultural resistance and identity work.

In this context, folk music serves not only the purpose of heritage preservation or artistic experimentation, but also fulfils a symbolic and ritual role in times of national trauma. These post-2022 practices can be understood as part of a postrevival or even a resurgence moment – a renewed reintegration of traditional genres into civic rituals. They often emerge spontaneously, without institutional support, yet are widely embraced by the public. Their relevance is affirmed not through formal recognition but through collective emotional response – silence, attention, and shared participation in the ritual.

IN THIS ARTICLE, I also build on the idea of *reinvention* as discussed by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger in their theory of invented traditions.¹⁶ While their work focused on how states construct traditions to serve ideological functions, I draw on the expanded perspective offered by Stephen Prickett.¹⁷ Prickett extends Hobsbawm’s framework by showing that reinvention can emerge from cultural memory and collective reinterpretation – not just from top-down state agendas. This approach allows for a more fluid understanding of how revived musical elements operate within new ceremonial and symbolic frameworks.

Thus, this study contributes to existing theoretical debates by positioning the Ukrainian wartime case at the intersection of *revival*, *postrevival* and *(re)invention*. Rather than applying these concepts as rigid categories, I use them as analytical tools to trace how examples of folk music travel across time, space, and meaning. While definitive conclusions require more empirical research, this research note opens a conversation about how folk music functions not only as a carrier of memory but as an active participant in the construction of wartime civic identity.

Alongside folk genres, many contemporary funerals also feature popular Ukrainian songs and patriotic music, reflecting an expanded sonic repertoire of mourning that reinforces narratives of resistance and resilience. Recent research and media

projects have analyzed the role of popular sound in the wartime landscape in contemporary Ukraine.¹⁸ While folk music has become an increasingly visible part of modern military funerals, its role remains relatively understudied – an area this research note seeks to explore.

While shaping new revival models

During upheavals such as war, society often focuses on what is most essential for physical and psychological survival. After February 2022, new rituals have become an integral part of life under conditions of permanent uncertainty – the so-called “new normality”.¹⁹ In Soviet and early post-Soviet Ukraine, military funerals were largely formal and state-controlled, with minimal or no use of music beyond official marches. Since 2014, during the war in Donbas, more personalized and emotionally expressive musical elements began to appear, such as patriotic and folk songs (for example, *Plyve kacha*). This period also saw the revival of the nearly forgotten tradition of lamentation (*holosinnia*), in which close relatives – often mothers or wives – bid farewell to the deceased through improvised sung weeping. Military funeral rituals have now become a routine part of wartime life in Ukraine and have undergone significant transformations. This applies not only to the structure of the procession but also to its verbal-musical content. As previous research showed,²⁰

new rituals often emerged in fragmentary form from the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war, and after the full-scale invasion, both their frequency and diversity increased considerably. In this section, I examine three examples of folk music through the lens of the *folk music revival* and the *(re)invention* of tradition. I also consider the performers’ professional backgrounds (whether they are trained musicians or not), the sources and functions of the music, and the degree of collective initiative involved. My focus on

urban military funerals helps illuminate how rural traditions are being recontextualized within the urban environment.

ONE OF THE noticeably new sounds of the modern military ritual is the performance of historical (Cossack) folk songs – part of the oral tradition of Ukraine, originally transmitted without musical notation and performed by traveling singers such as kobzars (see endnote 1). Although many of these songs are anonymous and have collective authorship, some of them were later recorded or arranged by ethnographers and composers during the 19th and 20th centuries. In modern practice, both traditional and adapted versions are performed. After the full-scale invasion, this function during military rituals in Kyiv was taken over by Chorea Kozacky, an early music ensemble under the leadership of the famous Ukrainian singer and kobzar Taras Kompanichenko, who has been serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine since February 2022. It is worth noting that even before the full-scale war, the group also performed compositions during the funerals of civil-

“AFTER FEBRUARY 2022, NEW RITUALS HAVE BECOME AN INTEGRAL PART OF LIFE UNDER CONDITIONS OF PERMANENT UNCERTAINTY.”

ians (famous dissidents and representatives of the political and cultural elite). Using the example of the Chorea Kozacky ensemble from the point of view of music revival during the full-scale war, I would like to discuss the funeral of Dmytro Kotsyubailo, commander of the “Da Vinci Wolves” battalion, Hero of Ukraine (2021), and leader in Right Sector (Pravyi Sektor), a right-wing Ukrainian nationalist organization,²¹ specifically the performance of the *Oj na hori vohon’ horyt’* [Oh, on the hill a fire is burning].²² It is important to note that this song is part of the repertoire that the band of ten performs during military funeral rituals in Kyiv.

This old historical song tells the story of a Cossack who died on the battlefield, where the traditional *kytaika* (a red fabric covering the Cossack’s body) is a returned symbol of the fallen warrior’s courage and heroism. The ensemble singing lines of poetry alternates with instrumental interludes (kobza, drums, violin, shawm). Singing Cossack historical songs at a military funeral is a restoration of an ancient Cossack tradition. Ukrainian researcher Lyudmyla Ivannikova, who has studied rural and urban funeral traditions for many years, concluded in her report on the musical-verbal component of modern funerals that:

Performing Cossack songs in cities does not contradict tradition and is part of it or its modification. [...] There is a mutual influence of different elements of urban and rural funerals.²³

Thus, the performance of this song is essentially following an ancient funeral tradition and, according to Stephen Prickett’s concept, can be interpreted as an example of the reinvention of tradition.²⁴

A similar function at this funeral is performed by the folk instrument *trembita*. Trembita is a traditional Ukrainian musical instrument, also called the soul of the Ukrainian Carpathians, its place of origin. The instrument looks like a wooden tube up to 2–3 meters long and has a resonant, low-pitched tone. The trembita is a natural horn with no finger holes or valves; it produces tones based on the natural harmonic series, making it diatonic in character but limited in melodic range. The appearance of the trembita in the military ceremony of the city is, on the one hand, a new phenomenon, but on the other hand, it represents the revival of Hutsul funeral traditions geographically relocated from the Ukrainian Carpathians. *Hutsuls* is a term used to refer to the ethnocultural group of Ukrainians living in the Carpathians. During an interview, Maksym Berezhnyuk, Ukrainian musician and member of Chorea Kozacky, explained the significance of this initiative:

This shows that trembita is not just a signaling instrument for some ceremonial events but primarily a ritual instrument.²⁵



During the funeral of Dmytro Kotsyubailo, the historical cosack song *Oj na hori vohon’ horyt’* was performed.

Today, the sound of a trembita at a funeral may seem somewhat unusual for residents of large cities, as this is a rural tradition. Ukrainians are used to perceiving the trembita as a musical-stage instrument. For example, the trembita brightly sounded in Ruslana Lyzhychko’s song *Wild Dances* during Eurovision in 2004 (see endnote 15). The song from Ukraine then won this competition for the first time. In Ruslana’s song, the trembita made its international musical debut as a signaling folk instrument, and became a “globally modified ‘identification code’ of Ukraine”.²⁶ The trembita is also associated as a vivid symbol of “Ukrainianness” (the phenomenon of Ukrainian identity). After such a successful international experience, the trembita returned to Ukraine and, along with other folk instruments, sounded anew in the creativity of various musical groups (for example, “ONUKA”, “Koralli”). The trembita, as a traditional (rural) instrument, usually performed two functions – signaling, and funerary-ritual.

SOMETIMES, INSTEAD OF the traditional 3–4 trembitas, a whole orchestra of trembitas accompanies the funeral. For example, during a funeral in Western Ukraine (Ivano-Frankivsk), as many as 13 trembitas sounded. In addition, along with them, 7 smaller local signaling instruments – horns (*rohы*) – appear in the ensemble. The horn also has two functions in Carpathian rural culture: as a signal to scare away wolves from the sheep flocks in the mountains, and as a ritual instrument. The unusual loud sound of such a number of instruments in this context reveals special respect for the fallen warrior Andriy Chepil, a well-known musician and trembita performer in the Ukrainian folk-rock band Koralli.²⁷ The new ritual sound of the Carpathian trembita today is a rethinking and return of the instrument to its traditional natural sphere.

Although the trembita had already undergone a stylized revival in the early 2000s as a symbolic and stage instrument, its contemporary use in military funerals invites further discussion.

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On the one hand, this may be viewed as a *second revival* or *neo-revival*, since its ritual function — as opposed to its signaling or symbolic role — was not fully revived or explored during the earlier phase. On the other hand, the shift from symbolic representation to active ritual use may be interpreted as a case of *postrevival*, in which a previously revived cultural element undergoes functionalization and ritual recontextualization. This ambiguity reflects broader theoretical challenges in defining revival stages and prompts further reflection on how ritual and symbolic functions evolve during times of crisis.

Militarization as a form of “normalization” in wartime Ukraine has also intensified folk processes that predated the full-scale invasion. Ukrainian scholar Oksana Kuzmenko describes the recent popularity of the song *Oi, u luzi chervona kalyna* [Oh, the Red Viburnum in the Meadow] as a case of repeated folklorization.²⁸ Originally composed in 1914 by Stepan Charnetskyi and associated with the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen (Army of the People’s Republic in 1917), the song combines literary roots with Cossack imagery and military themes. Over the past century, it has circulated across different political regimes, often resurfacing during periods of national resistance. Kuzmenko notes that the song, having

originated in a military context, has now “returned” to the army — particularly the Armed Forces of Ukraine — in new musical interpretations. After February 2022, the song regained widespread popularity, becoming a unifying symbol of Ukrainian resilience. Its global resonance grew after a widely shared performance by Ukrainian musician Andrii Khlyvniuk, followed by remixes and reinterpretations by international artists such as The Kiffness and Pink Floyd.²⁹ In this sense, the process of *folklorization* can be understood as part of broader revival and postrevival dynamics, in which traditional or symbolic repertoire gains new relevance within contemporary ritual and acts of cultural resistance.

THESE DYNAMICS are not limited to historical or widely recognized songs. They also manifest in more intimate, authorial compositions that undergo symbolic transformation under the pressure of collective trauma. One such process is also observed today. Here we turn to the third model — the lullaby *Kolysochka klenovaia* [Maple Cradle], which underwent a genre-functional transition. This lullaby, sung by Ivanna Dymyd³⁰ during the church funeral of her fallen son Artemii Dymyd,³¹ has an authorial origin (lyrics by Andriy Panchyshyn, music by Viktor Morozov). It was initially performed by the composer himself in a lyrical, emotionally expressive style to guitar accompaniment.³² Later, it entered the concert repertoire of the renowned Ukrainian vocal ensemble *Pikkardiyska Tertsyiya*,³³ who presented it in a brighter character, while retaining the minor tonality, shifting its use from intimate domestic space to public performance directed at audience appreciation. This trajectory represents a classic example of folklorization, where an authored piece is reinterpreted for new socio-cultural settings.

Ivanna Dymyd’s performance, however, marked a further transformation — one deeply personal yet symbolically national. Her rendition is closer to the original in tone but differs in mode and intonation. The original version performed by Viktor Morozov features a more expressive melodic line and dynamic contour: each first line of the poetic stanza includes the raised 4th and 6th degrees (A \sharp and C \sharp) of E minor — the Ukrainian Dorian mode, also known as the Hutsul mode. In contrast, Ivanna’s version is sung in natural A minor and has a more restrained character. In an interview, she reflected on this experience:

Singing the lullaby, I communicated with my son’s soul, and it dawned on me that this is the ‘maple cradle’. Only in the church did I realize the depth of this lullaby. And that moment was entirely mine. It was the ‘cry’ with which a new child is born. It was a new birth. My application for a new existence. The previous Ivanka is no more.³⁴

The lullaby, as a classic genre of children’s folklore, traditionally reflected the intimate “mother-child” relationship. In Ivanna Dymyd’s performance, this relationship is rearticulated within a ritual framework: the lullaby is addressed not to a sleeping infant, but to her adult son who died in war. This act signifies a profound inversion of the genre’s life-affirming function and evokes the traditional role of lamentation (*holosinnia*). The performance

exemplifies a layered process of postrevival and folklorization, in which an authored song – already integrated into the folk-pop canon – takes on new ritual and symbolic meanings. Through its recontextualization, private maternal grief becomes part of a public mourning ritual, shaped by emotional resilience and national trauma.

WHILE REVIVAL typically refers to the deliberate restoration of traditional forms from the past, folklorization describes the process through which non-folk material – often authored songs – acquire folk-like characteristics and social functions through popular and ritual use. These two processes often intersect, reflecting both the preservation and transformation of cultural memory. In this sense, Ivanna Dymyd's lullaby functions not merely as personal expression, but as a cultural response to war, transforming grief into a shared symbolic act. While the lullaby has received particular analytical attention here due to its symbolic transformation and relevance to current revival processes, the performance aspects of the trembita and kobza – such as rhythm, modality, and technique – require separate, in-depth study beyond the scope of this article.

Concluding remarks

New folk music interventions in contemporary Ukrainian military funerals reflect a few revival models that illustrate society's adaptation to the ongoing conditions of war. The current funerary soundscape demonstrates a significantly broader diversity and intensity of musical and ritual innovation. The first two examples discussed in this article – the Cossack historical song and the trembita – can be described as cases of postrevival. These elements, which were already present in Ukrainian folk and popular culture, underwent revival in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Their presence in military funerals marks a transition from concert or media contexts into urban ritual settings, where they assume new roles in public commemoration and national mourning ceremonies. For instance, the trembita, once stylized for Eurovision performances and contemporary music projects, has re-emerged in its ritual function, bridging village and city, past and present. At the same time, the trembita raises further questions: does this represent a second wave of revival – a deepening of earlier efforts – or a new phase of post-revival refunctionalization? This ambiguity highlights the complexity of revival models during wartime,



Ivanna Dymyd, mother of 27 year old Artemii Dymyd, killed in Mykolaiv Oblast, sings him his last lullaby in the Lviv Garrison Church on June 22, 2022.

when symbolic, ritual, and emotional functions often intersect and evolve in unexpected ways.

This tension invites an interpretive framework based on (re)invention, as formulated by Stephen Prickett. While Eric Hobsbawm emphasized top-down constructions of tradition, Prickett points to more flexible and collective acts of cultural reimagining, rooted in memory and new ritual needs. Thus, the modern use of the trembita can be viewed not only as a continuation of revival or postrevival efforts but also as an example of ritual reinvention – where the very structure and social function of ritual are transformed in response to national trauma.

“THE CURRENT FUNERARY SOUNDSCAPE DEMONSTRATES A SIGNIFICANTLY BROADER DIVERSITY AND INTENSITY OF MUSICAL AND RITUAL INNOVATION.”

THE EXAMPLE of the lullaby presents a more intimate yet no less complex model. Here, a genre traditionally associated with motherhood and domestic care is transformed into a requiem for a fallen son. This illustrates how personal grief can become a catalyst for broader ritual transformation. In Ivanna Dymyd's performance, the lullaby emerges as a symbolic and ritualized act of

farewell – a form of maternal lament (*holosinnia*). Its recontextualization within the domain of civic mourning ritual exemplifies both postrevival and folklorization: an authored piece that previously circulated within folk-pop environments assumes new emotional and social functions through public ritual use. The symbolic transformation of the lullaby – from a private gesture of love into a shared expression of loss – is a vivid example of how non-folkloric material can be integrated into a living tradition during wartime.

More broadly, revival typically refers to the conscious re-creation of past traditional forms, while folklorization describes the process by which non-folk material – often authored songs – acquires folk characteristics and social functions through popular or ritual use. These processes often intersect, reflecting both the preservation and transformation of cultural memory. In this sense, Ivanna Dymyd’s lullaby operates not only as a personal expression of emotion but as a cultural response to war – a collective symbolic act that channels grief into a form of ritual resistance.

In all three cases, music performs a therapeutic function. Some musicians engage with heritage as part of a deliberate revival project, while others turn to music as a spontaneous means of processing trauma and loss. These ritual musical acts function not merely as aesthetic or symbolic gestures but as coping mechanisms – manifestations of love, resilience, and cultural continuity. As the saying goes, “music reflects its time.” In Ukraine, it reflects not only personal loss but a broader cultural transformation – a rethinking of grief, motherhood, and national identity into symbolic and ritualized forms of resistance.

AS THE WAR CONTINUES, the future trajectories of these musical models remain uncertain. Nevertheless, this study offers a snapshot of the current revival dynamics shaping Ukrainian ritual culture. By framing these practices through the lens of (re)invention, the article underscores how societies in crisis revisit and rework cultural memory – not to replicate the past, but to survive, resist, and remember in the present.

In this context, it is worth recalling Owe Ronström’s observation: “Revival is a process of traditionalization that takes place in the present, to create symbolic links to the past for the sake of the future”.³⁵ These words prompt us to reflect on what kind of tradition Ukrainian society is currently constructing – not merely as a response to loss, but as a cultural investment in a peaceful future. At the same time, these ritual and musical interventions can be viewed as part of a broader process of national identity formation. As Hobsbawm argued, invented traditions are key instruments in nation-building, particularly during periods of crisis or transformation. In the Ukrainian case, this process resonates with longer historical trajectories of nation-making – from the Cossack era’s early struggles for autonomy and the 1917 Ukrainian People’s Republic to the 1991 independence and the cultural revivals of the 21st century. Thus, these revived and reimagined musical practices are not only responses to war but acts of symbolic sovereignty – a form of cultural resistance that helps define what it means to be Ukrainian today and in the future. ✖

Inna Shvorak holds a PhD in Arts and is an independent researcher.

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references

- 1 Trembita – a traditional Ukrainian wind instrument (horn up to 3 meters in length), historically used for signaling in the Carpathian Mountains and for ritual purposes, such as funerals. Horn – in this context, a smaller Carpathian wind instrument used both in shepherding and in ritual music. Kobza – a Ukrainian plucked string instrument similar to a lute, the principal instrument of *kobzars* – often blind itinerant musicians who performed epic tales (*dumy*), historical ballads, lyrical songs, and psalms. Drum – a general percussion instrument commonly used to accompany traditional ensembles.
- 2 In Ukrainian public and performance contexts, this music is often referred to as *tradytsiina muzyka* (“traditional music”) – a term used to distinguish grassroots, orally transmitted rural practices from the staged *narodna muzyka* (“folk music”) promoted during the Soviet era. This distinction, widely adopted by ethnomusicologists and ensembles such as Drevo, Bozhychi, and Buttia, reflects a post-Soviet redefinition of Ukrainian cultural identity and emphasizes the preservation of regional styles and ritual contexts.
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