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Principles of Myroslav Skoryk's Individual Style of Music in the Piano Cycle of Preludes and Fugues

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the works of Myroslav Skoryk, a prominent Ukrainian composer, who is well known on the Polish music scene. Two pairs of preludes and fugues from the polyphonic cycle for piano are discussed in particular: C major No. 1 and F major No. 6. The compositions are subjected to musicological and performance analysis. The stylistic and interpretative specificity of these pieces is also considered.

Keywords: piano music, prelude, fugue, polyphonic cycle, works of Ukrainian composers, Myroslav Skoryk.

Myroslav Skoryk is one of the best-known and honoured composers of our time, who represents Ukrainian musical culture of the last third of the twentieth century not only in Ukraine but also abroad. The composer's achievements have drawn an extremely wide attention of people due to the diversity of genres and styles in his musical work and the artistic and figurative peculiarity of his individual style, which naturally combines perfect mastery of modern means of artistic expression and the achievements of the European schools of composition with a thorough reinterpretation of the inner, deep foundations of folk music tradition.

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Myroslav Skoryk's creative work is well known on the Polish music scene, both professional and amateur. His works are more and more often heard in Polish concert halls and theaters; they are performed by both Ukrainian and Polish musicians who admire the extraordinary talent of the composer. M. Skoryk has achieved the greatest popularity in Poland as a composer and conductor over the last twenty years. A number of musical groups from Ukraine promoted the spread of his works on Polish music scene, in particular the chamber orchestra of the Mykola Lysenko Lviv National Music Academy, which used to be directed by the composer himself¹.

A significant place in the composer's musical heritage is occupied by his piano work, which is characterised by a diversity of genres and styles and an extraordinary expressiveness of artistic imagery. Kateryna Ivakhova notes on this issue that

Myroslav Skoryk's piano works have highlighted new figurative-thematic and genre-style key points in Ukrainian music, crystallised qualitatively new tendencies of the aesthetics of neo-folklore, neoclassicism and polystylistics and influenced the development of post-modernism. His piano music combines large scale with sophistication of the musical language, and the range of traditional origins of his compositional thinking is connected with both the national school of composition and the European musical avant-garde of the twentieth century, representing the Ukrainian school of composition at the level of European music culture².

Therefore, the aim of the article is to outline the particularities of M. Skoryk's individual style of music in the piano cycle of preludes and fugues, analyse the performance problems and outline possible directions in the work of the performer-interpreter in particular mini-cycles.

In the second half of the twentieth century, many Ukrainian professional musicians turned to baroque genre models, using them as a basis for various stylistic transformations. This is most likely due to the importance of the baroque era in the formation and development of professional Ukrainian musical art connected with the names of M. Berezovskyi, D. Bortnianskyi and A. Vedel, and their relevance to the mentality of the Ukrainians. The interest in baroque and classical genres is clearly visible in the works of M. Skoryk (for example in Suite in D major or the partitas he composed for different casts of instruments).

¹ Cf. Ольга Попович, *Репрезентація творчості Мирослава Скорика на польських сценах*, "Молодь і ринок" 2019, № 3 p. 75, [DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24919/2308-4634.2019.166279>], [Cf. Olha Popovych, *Reprezentatsiya tvorchosti Myroslava Skoryka na pol's'kykh stsenakh*, "Molod' i rynok" 2019, № 3 (170), p. 75, [DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24919/2308-4634.2019.166279>]].

² Катерина Івахова, *Фортепіанна творчість Мирослава Скорика (художньо-дидактичний концепт): монографія*, наук. ред. д-р мистецтвозн., проф. Любов Кияновська, ПП "Медобори-2006", Кам'янець-Подільський 2013, p. 11. [Kateryna Ivakhova, *Fortepianna tvorchist' Myroslava Skoryka (khudozhn'o-dydaktychny kontsept): monohrafiya*, наук. ред. d-r mystetstvozn., prof. Lyubov Kyuanovs'ka, PP "Medobory-2006", Kam'yanets'-Podil's'kyu 2013, p. 11]. All translations – author.

The cycle was written during 1986–88 and performed for the first time in Kyiv and soon in Lviv, where it was presented to the Lviv Plenum of the Union of Composers of Ukraine in the autumn of 1988. Later, some microcycles were performed in Kyiv; they were included in the teaching repertoire of Ukrainian music schools and conservatories³.

The cycle comprises one book, which contains six micro-cycles arranged according to the degrees of ascending chromatic scale (C major, D flat major, D major, E flat major, E major, F major). This succession of tonalities suggests that the cycle was to be written on the basis of 12 tonalities, but the work on the second book was suspended.

The tonality of the preludes and fugues declared by the author as major raises a number of questions because the inclination of the works presented in the cycle is not always identified, even “by ear”, as major and, in general, tonal connections in the cycle are quite relative, which is emphasised even by the fact that the composer does not reveal key signatures. Sometimes, the tonality and major inclination are skilfully veiled in the work.

For example, in *Fugue in C major*, the theme begins with a third – the sound “e¹” – and the response begins with the third of the dominant “b¹”, hence the tonic-dominant correlation of the theme and reply is preserved. It seems that everything is clear, but extraordinary things happen in the perception of tonality and inclination of the sound – the theme is perceived “by ear” in the Phrygian e minor, and the tonal answer in natural e minor with an increased sixth degree “c” – “c sharp” (a sign of the Dorian mode). This perception occurs if one begins to play the fugue separately from the prelude. If the theme is played immediately after the prelude, the ear remembers the C major sounds which complete it, and then the theme is not perceived to be in a minor key; it has a light sound and a contemplative character. But the answer still sounds like E minor, as in the continuation of the melodic line – the downward course “e¹-d¹-c¹-b” and in the answer – “b¹-a¹-b¹-F-sharp²-g²”.

Moderato con moto

Example 1. *Fugue in C major*, bars 1–4.

³ Любов Кияновська, *Мирослав Скорик: людина і митець. Монографія*, СПОЛОМ, ЛЬВІВ 2008, p. 402. [Lyubov Kyuanovs'ka, *Myroslav Skoryk: lyudyna i mytets'. Monohrafiya*, SPOLOM, L'viv 2008, p. 402].

The question is why C major? C major is not a tonality that the work begins with, but the one it will move to. In the 32nd bar, there is a *stretto* introduction of themes: the lower and upper voices enter simultaneously from the sounds “C” and “e¹” respectively, and the middle voice – from “g¹” with a time difference of 1.5 beats; taken together, all three entries in their first sounds give a full T⁵₃ in C major. The end of the fugue sounds bright, overturning the figurative and semantic arch towards the end of Bach’s fugues.

All preludes and fugues in the cycle are extremely diverse, differing in artistic images, the use of polyphonic techniques and the means of musical expression used by the composer. In many respects, the genre of prelude and fugue is interpreted by the composer in a traditional way: the development of the form of the prelude, fugues structured in compliance with classical requirements, the use of both three-part (D, E flat, F) and two-part forms, in which the second part combines the features of the developing and final parts (C, D flat, E). The cycle comprises one two-part fugue (D flat), three three-part fugues (C, E, F) and two four-part fugues (D flat, E flat).

In general, the cycle of preludes and fugues by M. Skoryk combines the classical standards of polyphonic writing with a clearly individual style of sound. The intonation structure of his works is quite unique. Alla Zaderatska characterises the preludes as having “a clearly dynamic relief”. She notes that

[...] the differences in the dynamics of the form of the prelude are quite significant, and the amplitude of dynamics is extensive, which gives the sound an intrinsically active, nervous character (the author means the so-called „hidden nerve” of the sound – L. Ts.) that is full of unpredictable emotional changes⁴.

She attributes these peculiarities to the stylistic characteristics of M. Skoryk’s music as well as thematic invention, which is full of internal contrasts and ease of change, transition and special improvisation⁵. In the fugues, the researcher considers the stylistically distinguishing features primarily in the choice of the dominant type of technique. She believes that for M. Skoryk, it is mirror inversion, which has its own underlying system in each fugue. A. Zaderatska also singles out a strongly marked tendency to culmination, which, as a rule, coincides with a smooth, wavy approach in registers that are often extreme – a typical Skoryk’s hallmark⁶.

The most complete and thorough study of M. Skoryk’s heritage is presented in the works of Liubov Kyianovska. She notes that the individual style of music in M. Skoryk’s pieces makes itself felt in the overlap of several stylistic models with their deliberately emphasized semantic signs and “sign situations”, i.e. those

⁴ Алла Задерацька, *Прелюдії та фуги. Мирослав Скорик: збірка статей*, В-во “СПОЛОМ”, Львів, 1999, pp. 41–53. [Alla Zaderats’ka, *Prelyudiyi ta fuhy. Myroslav Skoryk: zbirka statey*, V-vo “SPOLOM”, L’viv, 1999, pp. 41–53].

⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ Ibidem.

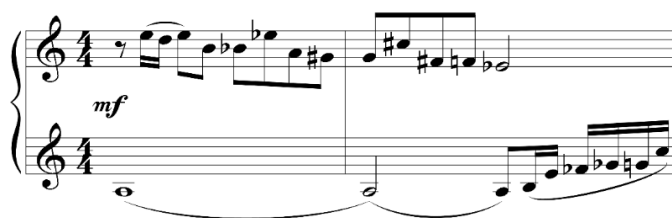
expressive elements that are identified by the listeners as belonging to the measure. The researcher notes, however, that they are arranged in such a way that they do not ensure natural unity – despite similar techniques, inversions, “formulas” that are incidental to the genre, etc. – but, on the contrary, are opposed in their paradoxical incompatibility. Liubov Oleksandrivna concludes that united in a single artistic piece, they do not seem to seek to be synthesised in a new artistic quality, but deliberately preserve the complete “independence” and detachment of the expression of each of the represented styles, uniting more closely on the principle of diffusion⁷.

Liubov Oleksandrivna notes that the composer is one of the few who most consistently use a variety of metaphorically associated options of transformation and modification of art forms of the past into an updated original musical language and tradition, in which the features of different musical cultures are intertwined⁸.

Having no opportunity for examining all six mini-cycles of M. Skoryk's polyphonic opus “Preludes and Fugues” in a brief article, we will dwell more thoroughly on two of them: “C major” and “F major” (№ 1 and № 6); they were selected on the basis of the principle of contrast, and, according to the author of the article, comprehensively convey the polyphonic thinking of the composer.

Prelude and Fugue in C major

The cycle begins with a relatively small prelude (26 bars) of through-composed development, the first intonation of which is based on a 12-tone scale.



Example 2. Bars 1–2.

This intonation occurs only once more – at the end of the work. A. Zaderatska considers them as “a peculiar kind of signature tunes”⁹. Such an unexpected be-

⁷ Любов Кияновська, *Мирослав Скорик: людина і митець*, р. 381. [Lyubov Kyuanovs'ka, *Myroslav Skoryk: lyudyna i mytets'*, р. 381].

⁸ Катерина Івахова, *Фортепіанна творчість Мирослава Скорика*, р. 13. *Kateryna Ivakhova, Fortepianna tvorchist' Myroslava Skoryka*, р. 13].

⁹ Алла Задерацька, *Прелюдії та фуги. Мирослав Скорик*, р. 43. [Alla Zaderats'ka, *Prelyudiyi ta fuyi. Myroslav Skoryk*, р. 43].

ginning of the prelude (because apart from these “signature tunes”, there are no dodecapronic principles of the arrangement of musical material in the prelude) suggests that the composer encoded in it the 12 tonalities of the whole cycle.

The texture of the prelude mainly consists of two parts of through-composed development; the main tone “C”, which is declared by the composer in this cycle as “C major”, is observed in the previously mentioned “signature tunes” at the beginning and end of the work. It begins with a rhythmic pattern, which later becomes the core of the theme of the fugue – two sixteenth notes and one eighth note occur throughout the prelude as a peculiar kind of leitmotif of this mini-cycle.



Example 3. The beginning of the theme of the prelude.

One characteristic feature of the prelude is a very wide dilution of registers, especially in the culmination of the work (bars 19–22) and the beginning of the final intonation (bar 23) – 6 octaves. The prelude ends in C major, which suggests the sound “e” (the third of the tonic chord) in the upper voice.

The prelude contains a number of performance and interpretation challenges. The melodic line of voices is full of elements that require meticulous performance: short phrase marks on two or three notes, *tenuto*, accents, *staccato*. The special, somewhat capricious nature of the prelude depends on the exact execution of these elements.



Example 4. Bars 5–8.

Analysing the score, the author of the article came to the conclusion that *non legato* plays an important role in the work. In modern scores, the authors do not always write down all the necessary phrase marks, but M. Skoryk elaborately specifies many of them, including those over the sixteenth note durations but not over the eighth and fourth notes, which makes it possible to interpret their performance as *non legato*. It provides the performer with a wide margin for interpretation. The use of the pedal can be minimised, which will make the sound more rigorous and unexpansive. This approach may be justified in baroque tradition since past and present trends are combined in Skoryk’s cycle. However, a different method can also be chosen – to use a thicker pedal, which will make it possible

to feel a wide intonation breath and highlight the tone colour of all melodic lines. In the piano music of the second half of the twentieth century, pedalling plays a primary role in creating vivid sound effects.

The same *non legato* with the duration of an eighth note will sound completely different when using a vibrating pedal or a micro-pedal. I. Kokhanyk's opinion in this regard seems accurate:

[...] work with modern musical material requires creative imagination and deep knowledge of the laws of modern music heritage both from performers (their role in the creative process today is often equated to or even more significant than the composer's) and researchers¹⁰.

Fugue in C major begins with the theme of the third sound “e”, which is based on the initial thematic core of the prelude and has two contrasting elements: the first – the core – is grounded on a bright motif in the melodic and rhythmic sense, the second – created on general types of melodic movement. The division of these motives is emphasized by a pause between them.



Example 5. The theme of the fugue, bars 1–3.

The response is obvious; the counterpoint is constant, and its expressive effect is achieved due to the contrasting motif, which contains, at first glance, a hidden duet in its first element and a clear upward movement based on the rhythmic pattern of the core of the theme. According to the author of the article, in the fifth bar (see example 6) it is not necessary to distinguish two hidden voices through the *tenuto staccato* articulation but with a homogenous, springy sound. The fact that the composer put the *tenuto staccato* marking under each note of this element of the counterpoint proves that he thinks of this structure as a single melodic line, without a division into two hidden voices.



Example 6. Counterpoint, bars 4–7.

¹⁰ Ірина Коханюк, *Музичний стиль як сфера комунікації композитора, виконавця, музикознавця*, “Київське музикознавство”. 2017, Вип. 55, р. 75, Source: URL: http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/kmuz_2017_55_9 [access: 15.09. 2020]. [Ірина Коханюк, *Музичний стиль як сфера комунікації композитора, виконавця, музикознавця*, “Кийівське музикознавство”. 2017, Вип. 55, р. 75, Source: http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/kmuz_2017_55_9 [access: 15.09. 2020]].

The exposition of *Fugue in C major* is standard; the theme is alternately stated in all voices starting from the lower part of “e¹”, “b¹” and “e²”, and the tonic-dominant comparisons are preserved. As it has already been mentioned, C major tonality is not expressed in the exposition; it first appears in bar 15, i.e. the second part begins with it; the theme comes from “C” in the lower voice and in the upper voice, a *stretto* statement with a time indent of 1.5 beats comes from “g²”. This gives an impression of the major key, although the third of the tonic chord is not there to determine that. But from the 18th bar, the composer moves to tonal spheres that are far from the key of C major and only returns to it at the very end of the fugue. The exposition and the second part are connected by an interlude (bars 10–14) based on the motif of the thematic core and general types of melodic movement. In the second part, soft tonal comparisons, which reveal themselves in a rather faint resemblance to “C major”, and characteristic features of intensive polyphonic development are noticeable: numerous *stretto* with different time indents, intense unstable tonal development, themes developed from “c”, “g²”, “g sharp¹”, “e¹”, “A flat”, “g flat”, “b flat”, “B”. The composer uses themes in direct and inverse motion. He introduces transformations in the imitation of themes in direct motion and partially in inversion (Diagram 1, bars 19–20). The great interlude from the 27th to the 31st bar leads to the final development of the theme in a *stretto* texture from the sounds “e¹”, “C” and “g¹”. It is in this final *stretto* that the composer returns to the C major key, which is not revealed in a direct way but in the juxtaposition of voices. The shape of the fugue is similar to the baroque two-part form, i.e. the second part contains the development and the conclusion.

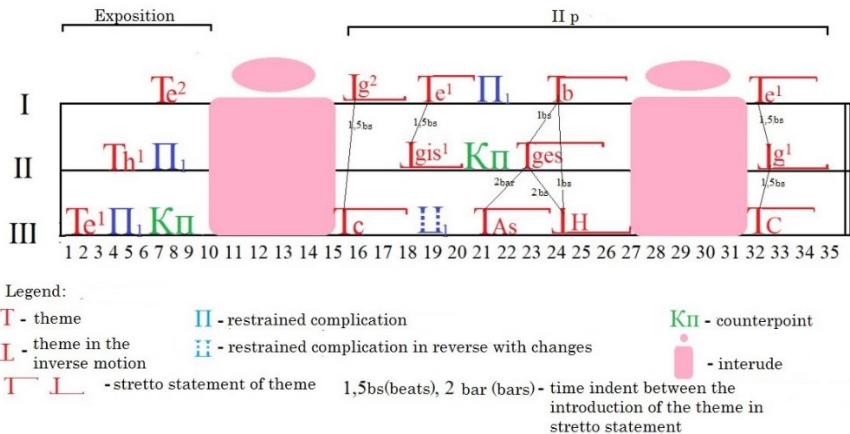


Diagram 1. M. Skoryk, *Fugue in C major No. 1.*

One of the performance difficulties in this fugue is the introduction of themes in the middle part without pausing before them. The performer must be extremely

concentrated so as not to “lose” the theme in the overall sound of the polyphonic texture.

In the opinion of the author of the article, the pedal is only used in the fugue for a smooth transition in places where it is difficult to do so without it. In the culmination of the work and on the approach to it (from bar 23) and in the gradual decrease of dynamics to the 32nd bar, a micro-pedal can be used in order to achieve a colourful overtone sound. Combining performance without a pedal, which is close to the baroque style, with using a micro-pedal, which makes it possible to produce aliquot sounds, will create an interesting interpretive version and integrate the “signs of different musical cultures” (L. Kyianovska).

Prelude and Fugue in F major. The prelude is quite extensional in terms of volume, with through-composed development and improvisatory nature. The tempo and character are identified by the composer as *Moderato capriccioso*. The capriccioso nature of the image results from the frequent changes of the measure ($\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{4}{4}$, $\frac{3}{8}$, $\frac{2}{4}$, $\frac{5}{8}$). The work begins with an expressive, graceful and extremely refined melody in F major, which is due to the capricious rhythmic patterns in the part of the right hand. The melody is characterised by the youthfulness and dreaminess of the image.



Example 7. Bars 1–3.

Allusions to other stylistic manners are especially typical for this prelude. For example, from the 10th bar, where the first division of the form occurs, musical intonations have the character of theatricalism, and musical phrases are separated by short pauses, which makes the sound similar to the vocal-declamatory forms of musical theatre. Jazz intonations are heard in the middle and at the end of the prelude.

One of the significant performance challenges in this prelude is not to lose the integrity of the form because of improvisation. In order to achieve that, the composer elaborately indicates the so-called “signposts” in the score – dynamic shadings which direct the expressiveness of intonation and phrasing. In this work, the composer brings the dilution of the registers to the ultimate limit; in the 55th bar, the melodic lines reach the extremes of the piano keyboard – $A_2 - c^5$.

It is a three-part fugue; the first statement of the theme occurs in the middle voice of “f” and gives the impression that it consists of 4 bars, but with the fol-

lowing statement it becomes clear that it is three-bar, and in the fourth bar, the author uses codetta before the response enters. The theme does not have a very wide range – it falls within the interval of the minor seventh and presents a cheerful and dance-like F major.

After the second statement of the theme (response) in the upper voice from “c²”, a two-bar interlude appears, which is written sequentially on the rhythmic-intonational elements of the theme. The same two-bar interlude occurs after the third theme statement from “F” in the lower part, after which the composer gives an additional statement from “c¹” framed by two counterpoints that move in the same rhythm in the exposition. The five-bar interlude unites the expositional part with the developing one; its peculiarity is that the voices in it move in a parallel rhythm almost everywhere. In the developing part, the theme is stated four times, and the principle of the structure of the developing part is similar to the beginning of the exposition, but the tonal aspect is different. The theme is stated from “A” (as if the fugue begins again but in a different key), and immediately there comes the theme from “e²”, as though in the form of a tonal response. And again, there is a theme from “F sharp¹” and a kind of response from “c sharp¹”. After these statements, the theme is no longer spread in full until the end of the developing part; further development can be interpreted as a giant interlude, which comprises 39 bars (expositional and developing parts together – 37 bars), built on the initial quarter and quint elements of the theme; it has an improvisational character and leads to the culmination of the fugue in the 77th bar, which starts the magnificent, festive final part with the mighty three-time statement of the theme in chordal texture (the third time – in a shortened form).

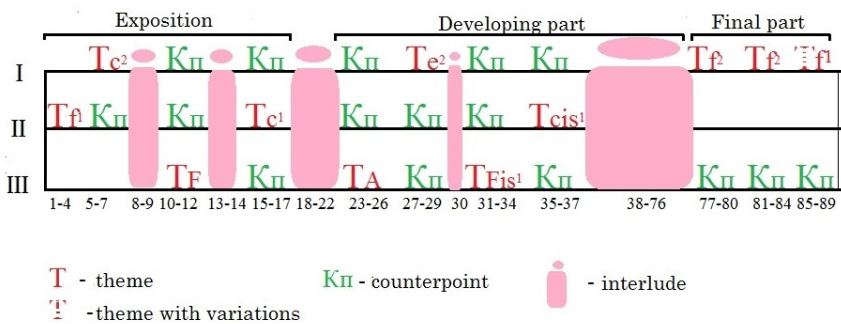


Diagram 2. M. Skoryk, *Fugue in F major No. 6*.

This fugue is particularly interesting both in terms of artistic imagery and structure. Based on Diagram 2, it is obvious that there is no *stretto* statement of themes in the inverse motion, whether increasing or decreasing. But the fugue is rich in interludes; in general, interlude statements have 49 bars out of 89 bars – it

is a major part of the fugue. The artistic and figurative structure of the work is just as interesting – it is not perceived “by ear” as a fugue, although the composer followed all the rules of polyphonic writing. This is due to the fact that the counterpoints move in the same rhythmic units (dotted rhythm) as the end of the theme; the simultaneous sound gives the impression of a fascinating dance and jazz piece of music. The counterpoint is often more expressive than the theme and occurs in the upper part (bars 15–17, 23–25, 31–33, 35–37). Furthermore, counter parts merge with each other into a single beautiful melodic line in the simultaneous flow of sound (bars 23–25, 31–33), which is not easy to divide polyphonically as it requires “exquisite” work with the sound. In this festive and dance-like rhythm, it is very easy to lose all the polyphony by pursuing the excitement caused by the emotionality of the sound. The fugue conjures up a fascinating artistic image and constitutes a great interpretative challenge for the performer. Its combination of tradition and modernity is captivating, and it demands extraordinary technical prowess and profound musical intuition.

Conclusions

The cycle of preludes and fugues for piano by M. Skoryk is an example of the composer's brilliant mastery of the polyphonic technique in combination with a creative rethinking of the norms of “classical” writing. The cycle is notable for its varied imagery, the use of diverse image-associative transformations of the baroque genre in a modern authorial musical expression, in which the images of different historical cultures naturally integrate. Each mini-cycle is characterised by certain main accents in their figurative content and shows a different approach to the interpretation of the baroque prototype. In the cycle of preludes and fugues for piano, Myroslav Skoryk's individual style of music finds its expression in the impressive changes of the images which are fundamental for the musical idiom of the composer. These features manifest themselves in the unexpected alterations of the techniques shaping the musical development and in numerous stylistic allusions and parallels, which make frequent appearances in the polyphonic cycle of preludes and fugues.

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Cechy indywidualnego stylu muzycznego Myrosława Skoryka w cyklu preludiów i fug na fortepian.

Abstrakt

Artykuł poświęcony jest twórczości Myrosława Skoryka, wybitnego ukraińskiego kompozytora, dobrze znanego na polskiej scenie muzycznej. W szczególności chodzi tu o omówienie dwóch par preludiów i fug: C-dur nr 1 i F-dur nr 6 z polifonicznego cyklu na fortepian. Kompozycje te zostały poddane analizie muzykologicznej i wykonawczej. Rozpatrzona została specyfika stylistyczna i interpretacyjna tych utworów.

Słowa kluczowe: muzyka fortepianowa, preludium, fuga, cykl polifoniczny, twórczość kompozytorów ukraińskich, Myrosław Skoryk.