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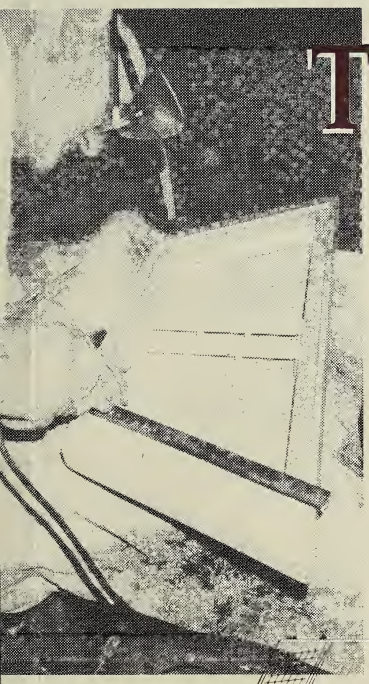
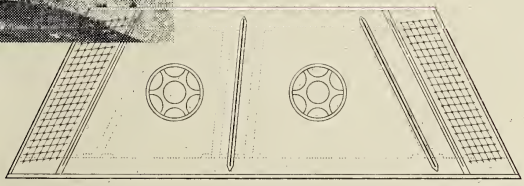


The Tsymbaly Maker and His Craft

The Ukrainian Hammered Dulcimer In Alberta



Mark Jaroslav Bandera

Huculak Chair of Ukrainian Culture & Ethnography
Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press

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THE TSYMBALY MAKER AND HIS CRAFT: THE UKRAINIAN HAMMERED DULCIMER IN ALBERTA

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Publication No. 1 - 1991

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University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta

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Figure 1. Map of east central Alberta. Adapted from Julian Stechishin, *Istoriia poselennia ukraintsiv u Kanadi* (Edmonton: Ukrainian Self-Reliance League, 1975), n.p.

INTRODUCTION

Tsymbaly[1] (Ukrainian hammered dulcimers) represent a popular present-day aspect of the Ukrainian immigrant complex in western Canada. The distinctive "Old Country sound" of the instrument is heard at weddings, dances, festivals, competitions, in recordings, and on the radio.[2]

Tsymbaly belong to a group of musical instruments generically called dulcimers, musical instruments of the zither type (without a keyboard) struck with hammers.[3] Dulcimers are distributed throughout much of the Old World. In western Europe dulcimers are variously known and characterized as psaltery, hackbrett, or dulce melos; in eastern Europe as tympanom or cymbalom; in the Middle East as santur; in Middle Asia as chang; and East Asia as yang chin.[4]

Dulcimers were brought from the British Isles and popularized in North America in the 1800s. They are generally identified as the hammer or hammered dulcimer (or dulcimore) to distinguish them from the more common appalachian or plucked dulcimer. This hammered dulcimer tradition largely died out at the beginning of the twentieth century, though it saw a revival in North America in the 1960s.[5]

Old World Ukrainian tsymbaly typically consist of a trapezoidal frame, 95-130 cm. (37-51 inches) long and 35-55 cm. (14-22 inches) wide, a sound board (with one to four sound holes), and two bridges. Over one hundred strings in groups called *bunty* (courses) rest on this structure. The *bunty*, consisting of two to six strings each, pass alternately over one bridge and under the other. The tsymbaly are played with sticks called *pal'tsiatky*, 12-16 cm. (4 1/2 - 6 inches) long.[6]

The *cymbalom* was popularized in eastern Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. A tsymbaly tradition existed in the Carpathians by the seventeenth century. At the end of the 1800s, tsymbaly were part of a strong musical tradition associated with ritual and social gatherings. This musical tradition was carried with Ukrainian

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[1]In this study, the term "tsymbaly" will be used for the Ukrainian dulcimer and "hammered dulcimer" for other North American variants in order to help distinguish their respective technical and contextual identities. The word "tsymbaly" is a plural in Ukrainian and will be treated as such in this work. C.H. Andrusyshen and J.N. Krett, *Ukrainian-English Dictionary* (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1957) was used where there were questions concerning Ukrainian terminology found in written works or used by informants.

[2]Robert B. Klymasz, "Sounds You Never Before Heard: Ukrainian Country Music in Western Canada," *Ethnomusicology* 16, no. 3 (1972), pp. 372-80.

[3]Erich M. von Hornbostel and Curt Sachs, "Classification of Musical Instruments," trans. Anthony Baines and Klaus P. Wachsmann, *Galpin Society Journal*, no. 14 (1961), pp. 20-2.

[4]David Kettlewell, "Dulcimer," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*, 1980 ed.

[5]Paul Gifford, "The Development of the Hammer Dulcimer," *Mugwumps Instrument Herald* 2, no. 5 (1974), pp. 19-23.

[6]Stanislaw Mierczynski, *Muzyka Huculszczyzny* (Cracow: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1965), pp. 150-5.

immigrants into western Canada, starting in the 1890s, and has enjoyed a continuous tradition to the present day. This study focuses on tsymbaly making in east central Alberta today. It is explored primarily through one tsymbaly maker, the contexts of his art, his craft, and audience.

Review of Research in the Field

Information about tsymbaly and tsymbaly craftsmen may occasionally be found in human interest stories in local papers, festival programme notes, and local histories; but few scholarly works exist about tsymbaly in North America, and there is a dearth of musical notation. An exception is Barre Toelken's short description and analysis of an Oregon tsymbaly maker in *The Dynamics of Folklore*.[7]

Studies from three major related fields contribute to the understanding of the tsymbaly craft. Firstly, tsymbaly are occasionally described in Ukrainian Canadian ethnography. A second related field is comprised of studies of folk music, instruments, and ethnography in Ukraine. The third related field is ethnomusicology. In this last category, tsymbaly are studied primarily in their international context.

A 1917 study by J.S. Woodsworth, *Ukrainian Rural Communities*, mentions tsymbaly among musical instruments of early immigrants.[8] Woodsworth documents early musical instruments in parts of east central Alberta. However, his survey of musical instruments is haphazard, often incomplete, and uses questionable nomenclature.

The work of Robert Klymasz stands at the forefront of Ukrainian Canadian folklore studies. His doctoral dissertation, Ukrainian Folklore in Canada, proffers the first comprehensive consideration of the processes at work in the Ukrainian immigrant complex in western Canada.[9] In this and his other publications, Klymasz cites tsymbaly in discussions of the wedding, Ukrainian country and western music, and festivals.[10] His contextual framework describing the dynamics of continuity and change is also relevant to the study of the tsymbaly phenomenon.

Other studies that recognize the dynamics of Ukrainian Canadian culture are found in *Visible Symbols: Cultural Expression Among Canada's Ukrainians*, based on the proceedings of a conference held at the University of Manitoba in 1981.[11] It is also in this spirit that "The Western Canadian Championships: Tsymbaly Competitions at the Red Barn" treats the present popularity of tsymbaly.[12]

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[7]Barre Toelken, *The Dynamics of Folklore* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), pp. 110-2.

[8]J.S. Woodsworth, *Ukrainian Rural Communities: Report of Investigation* (Winnipeg: Bureau of Social Research, 1917), pp. 46, 86.

[9]Robert B. Klymasz, *Ukrainian Folklore in Canada: An Immigrant Complex in Transition* (New York: Arno Press, 1980).

[10]His other works include *Continuity and Change: The Ukrainian Folk Heritage in Canada* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1972); "The Ethnic Folk Festival in North America Today," in *Ukraintsi v amerykans'komu ta kanads'komu suspil'stvakh*, ed. Wsevolod Isajiw (Jersey City: M.P. Kots, 1976), pp. 199-211; "Folk Music," in *Visible Symbols: Cultural Expression Among Canada's Ukrainians*, ed. Manoly R. Lupul (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1984), pp. 49-56.

[11]Manoly R. Lupul, ed., *Visible Symbols: Cultural Expression Among Canada's Ukrainians* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1984).

[12]Mark Bandera, "The Western Canadian Championships: Tsymbaly Competitions at the Red Barn," *Canadian Folk Music Journal* 11 (1983), pp. 28-33.

Other studies which deal with the Ukrainian music tradition in Canada are of little use in this examination of the tsymbaly phenomenon due to their particular focus or lack of sensitivity to folk processes. Among these are Kenneth Peacock's *A Survey of Ethnic Folkmusic Across Western Canada* and Philip Bassa's "Ukrainian Musical Culture in Canada."[13]

A second area of concern, tsymbaly in Ukraine, has been studied from various perspectives. Technical aspects of tsymbaly construction are provided by Mykola Lysenko in an interesting, though incomplete description in "Narodni muzychni strumenty na Vkraini" [Folk musical instruments in Ukraine], written in 1893.[14] Stanislaw Mierczynski, in *Muzyka Huculszczyzny* [Music of the Hutsul region], provides diagrams and descriptions of tsymbaly and their tunings based on material gathered from 1937 to 1939.[15]

Contextual discussion of tsymbaly is furnished by Hnat Khotkevych in *Muzychni instrumenty ukrains'koho narodu* [Musical instruments of the Ukrainian people].[16] He traces the origins of tsymbaly, relates Ukrainian tsymbaly to those of neighbouring nationalities, and documents the use of tsymbaly in ritual and song. Similar descriptions can be found in ethnographic works which relate to rituals with which tsymbaly are associated, as for example, "Muzyka ukrains'koho vesillia" [Music of the Ukrainian wedding] in *Vesil'ni pisni* [Wedding songs].[17]

In "K izucheniiu ukrains'koi narodnoi instrumental'noi muzyki" [Towards the study of Ukrainian folk instrumental music], Kliment Kvitka categorizes folk instruments according to the class of people who played them. Tsymbaly players belong in the professional category of musicians.[18] A professional Gypsy music tradition existed in much of Europe, including Ukraine. Gypsy dulcimer traditions are illustrated in Bálint Sárosi's *Gypsy Music*.[19]

In *Hraie orkestr ukrains'kykh narodnykh instrumentiv* [The Ukrainian folk instrument orchestra plays], Viktor Hutsal distinguishes between *mali* (small) or *hutsul's'ki* (Hutsul) tsymbaly and *velyki kontsertovi* (large concert) tsymbaly.[20] Recent Soviet studies generally display a strong bias for modern concert instruments. A. Humeniuk, in *Ukrains'ki narodni muzychni instrumenty* [Ukrainian folk musical

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[13]Kenneth Peacock, *A Survey of Ethnic Folkmusic Across Western Canada*, Anthropology Papers 5 (Ottawa: Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, November 1963); Philip Bassa, "Ukrainian Musical Culture in Canada," M.A. thesis, University of Montreal, 1955.

[14]This was first published under a pseudonym, Boian, "Narodni muzychni strumenty na Vkraini," *Zoria* 1, 4-10 (1894), pp. 17-9, 87-9, 112-4, 135-7, 161-2, 185-7, 211-2, 231-2. It was republished (with notes) as Mykola V. Lysenko, *Narodni muzychni instrumenty na Ukraini* (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1955).

[15]Mierczynski, *Muzyka Huculszczyzny*, pp. 150-5.

[16]Hnat Khotkevych, *Muzychni instrumenty ukrains'koho narodu* (Kharkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1930), pp. 155-63.

[17]A.I. Ivanyts'kyi, "Muzyka ukrains'koho vesillia," in *Vesil'ni pisni*, ed. O.I. Dei (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1982), pp. 54-69.

[18]Kliment Kvitka, "K izucheniiu ukrainskoi narodnoi instrumental'noi muzyki," in *Izbrannye trudy*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1973), pp. 251-78.

[19]Bálint Sárosi, *Gypsy Music*, trans. Fred Macnicol (Budapest: Corvina Press, 1978).

[20]Viktor Hutsal, *Hraie orkestr ukrains'kykh narodykh instrumentiv*, Raiduha, no. 11 (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1978).

instruments],[21] and O. Nezovybat'ko, in *Ukrains'ki tsymbaly* [Ukrainian tsymbaly] and *Shkola hry na ukrains'kykh tsymbalakh* [School for playing Ukrainian tsymbaly],[22] provide some historical background but define only concert tsymbaly as being representative of the present state of the folk art.[23]

Illustrations and descriptions of tsymbaly can also be found in catalogues. An example can be found in Ivan Chabyniak's *Muzychni instrumenty* [Musical instruments], describing the collection of the Museum of Ukrainian Culture in Svidnik.[24]

In the West there is increasing awareness and publication regarding dulcimers. The Library of Congress has published *The Hammered Dulcimer and Related Instruments: A Bibliography.*[25] Unfortunately, none of the listed materials deal specifically with Ukrainian tsymbaly, and those representing North America concentrate almost exclusively on dulcimers descended from English forms.

An overview of hammered dulcimers around the world is provided in David Kettlewell's "Dulcimer" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music.* He is also the authour of "The Dulcimer and Related Instruments," an unpublished Ph.D. dissertation.[26] John Leach provides another interesting overview in his article "The Psaltery and Dulcimer."[27]

A very good chapter on hammered dulcimer construction is contained in Paul Hasluck's *Violins and Other Stringed Instruments.*[28] Other sources concerned with construction include Phillip Mason's *How to Build a Hammer Dulcimer*, Howard Mitchell's *The Hammered Dulcimer: How to Make and Play It*, and Sam Rizetta's *Making a Hammer Dulcimer.*[29] Though not directly related to the tsymbaly building tradition, the aforementioned provide a good basis for comparison of the arts, specifically concerning technical aspects of construction.

Works of general interest concerning musical instruments include Geneviève Dournon's *Guide for the Collection of Traditional Musical Instruments*, Thomas Vennum Jr.'s *The Ojibwa Dance Drum*, Anthony Jackson's article "Sound and

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[21]Andrii Humeniuk, *Ukrains'ki narodni muzychni instrumenty* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1967), pp. 105-12.

[22]Oleksander Nezovybat'ko, *Ukrains'ki tsymbaly* (Kyiv: Muzychna Ukraina, 1976); Oleksander Nezovybat'ko, *Shkola hry na ukrains'kykh tsymbalakh* (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1966).

[23]See "Related Musical Traditions" below.

[24]Ivan Chabyniak, *Muzychni instrumenty. Kataloh vystavky* (Svidnik: Muzei ukrains'koi kul'tury, 1972), pp. 45-7.

[25]Evan Stein, comp., *The Hammered Dulcimer and Related Instruments: A Bibliography*, Archive of Folk Culture (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1979).

[26]David Kettlewell, "The Dulcimer and Related Instruments," Ph.D. dissertation, Loughborough University, 1973.

[27]John Leach, "The Psaltery and Dulcimer," *The Consort* 34 (1978), pp. 293-301.

[28]Paul N. Hasluck, *Violins and Other Stringed Instruments: How to Make Them* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1914), pp. 141-58.

[29]Phillip Mason, *How to Build a Hammer Dulcimer* (Front Royal, Virginia: Blue Ridge Dulcimer Shop, 1977); Howard W. Mitchell, *The Hammered Dulcimer: How to Make and Play It* (Sharon, Connecticut: Folk-Legacy Records, 1972) [Record (FSI43) and book]; Sam Rizetta, *Making a Hammer Dulcimer*, Leaflet 72-5 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1972).

Ritual," and Bruno Nettl's *Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology*.[30] Insight into the physics of the tsymbaly sound may be obtained in Robert Donington's *Music and Its Instruments*.[31]

Method

According to Bruno Nettl's discussion of ethnomusicology and specifically musical instruments, studies may focus on: (1) musical culture, (2) musical style, or (3) integration of musical style and culture.[32] This study will strive to deal with the first of these aspects, musical culture. Tsymbaly will be looked at as objects of material culture in their cultural context. The culture in which the tsymbaly phenomenon thrives can be interpreted as reflecting dynamic processes defined by the hemispheric school of folklore studies.[33]

Fieldwork provides the primary materials for this study. The most important recordings are videotapes of a tsymbaly maker working at his craft. An attempt was made to note his work as closely as possible. In addition, tape-recorded interviews were conducted with other craftsmen and players. During the interviews, various musical and extra-musical aspects of the tsymbaly were dealt with. Where possible, this primary data was then compared with other sources. Informants reside both in Edmonton, and east and northeast of the city in towns such as Tofield, Smoky Lake, Andrew, and Lamont.[34] The city informants trace their roots to the countryside as well.

The cultural context of tsymbaly in western Canada and specifically in east central Alberta is described in this first chapter. The tsymbaly phenomenon reflects the processes of continuity and change in the immigrant complex.

A profile of Tom Chychul, a representative tsymbaly maker, is presented in chapter two. His interpretation and characterization of the modern state of the art is explored.

In the third chapter, the musical instrument is dealt with as an object of material culture. The process of constructing modern tsymbaly is described.

In chapter four, various esoteric and exoteric aspects of tsymbaly and the tsymbaly craftsmen are discussed. Interviews with the instrument makers and players, as well as published sources, provide the basis for discussion.

The various dynamic characteristics of the tsymbaly making tradition are highlighted in the conclusion. The ability to adapt and the association with both old and new traditions assure continued survival. Two appendices, a glossary of

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[30]Geneviève Dournon, *Guide for the Collection of Traditional Musical Instruments*, Technical Handbook for Museums and Monuments No. 5 (Paris: UNESCO, 1981); Thomas Vennum, Jr., *The Ojibwa Dance Drum: Its History and Construction*, Smithsonian Folklife Studies 3 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1982); Anthony Jackson, "Sound and Ritual," *Man* 3 (1968), pp. 293-9; Bruno Nettl, *Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology* (London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964).

[31]Robert Donington, *Music and Its Instruments* (London: Methuen, 1982).

[32]Nettl, *Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology*, pp. 215-7.

[33]Richard M. Dorson, ed., *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 43-5.

[34]See figure 1.

tsymbaly making terms and a list of tsymbaly makers, have been added as an aid for the reader.

The Use of Tsymbaly in East Central Alberta

The first Ukrainian immigrants to Canada came almost exclusively from the Galician and Bukovynian areas of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. They were peasants whose primary motivation for leaving the Old Country was economic deprivation caused by "overpopulation, subdivision of land holdings, heavy taxation, and unfavourable political conditions."[35] The Bukovynians were primarily Orthodox, while the Galicians were Greek Catholic.[36]

There have been three primary waves of Ukrainian immigration to Canada. Beginning in the 1890s and over a period of almost twenty years, 170,000 Ukrainian immigrants entered Canada. The second immigration saw approximately 60,000 immigrants enter Canada between the wars.[37] In east central Alberta before World War II, most Ukrainian immigrants centred their lives around agriculture. Their settlements were primarily distributed near railway lines needed to transport grain.[38]

With today's modernization, urbanization, and secularization, less emphasis is placed on the regional distinctions of the Old Country. Common rural experience, language, customs, and culture bind the current Ukrainian community. The descendants of the pre-World War II immigrants, whether still engaged in agricultural pursuits or now urbanized, are the most active participants in the tsymbaly phenomenon.

During the third immigration, in the ten years following World War II, approximately 36,000 Ukrainians entered Canada.[39] Unlike the first two waves, the third migration was primarily politically motivated, and the immigrants came from all areas of Ukraine. This newer group settled primarily in urban centres.

Today, Ukrainians descended from the pre-World War II immigrations tend to interpret their culture differently from their post-World War II counterparts. The first group emphasizes synoptic primary symbols (represented by such items as embroidery, Easter eggs, and food) which refer to universal and unique expressions of the culture's values. In contrast, the post-World War II group emphasizes secondary symbols (such as the poet Taras Shevchenko or the bandura)[40] which evoke memories of persecution and efforts for national liberation.[41] Isajiw states that

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[35]Vladimir J. Kaye, *Early Ukrainian Settlements in Canada, 1895-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), p. 3.

[36]See John-Paul Himka, "The Background to Immigration: Ukrainians of Galicia and Bukovyna, 1848-1914," in *A Heritage in Transition: Essays in the History of Ukrainians in Canada*, ed. Manoly R. Lupul (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), pp. 11-31 for a good introduction to the conditions prior to emigration.

[37]Vladimir J. Kaye and Frances Swyripa, "Settlement and Colonization," in *A Heritage in Transition*, pp. 32-3.

[38]See figure 1.

[39]Kaye and Swyripa, "Settlement and Colonization," pp. 32-3.

[40]The bandura is recognized by third-wave Ukrainian immigrants as the national instrument of Ukraine.

[41]Wsevolod W. Isajiw, "Symbols and Ukrainian Canadian Identity: Their Meaning and Significance," in *Visible Symbols*, pp. 119-28.

> Synoptic primary symbols . . . can be said to be stronger symbols of ethnic identity than the descriptive secondary symbols because they implicitly contain more information about the group. Moreover, the kind of information contained provides a better link with the roots of the group, that is, its remote origins.[42]

Tsymbaly demonstrate the resiliency associated with synoptic primary symbols. The musical heritage of pre-World War II immigrants includes not only tsymbaly, but many other instruments including *sopilky* (various flutelike instruments), the *drymba* (jews'- or jaw's-harp), *duda* (bagpipe), and *trembita* (Ukrainian alpine horn).[43] None of these other instruments has enjoyed the popularity of tsymbaly, and most survive only in the memory of the community.[44]

Both tsymbaly mediums and the role of the instrument in music have changed in Canada. Why and how tsymbaly continue to address the needs and memory of their culture will be examined in this chapter. Dournon states that

> We may also note that in the more or less rapid process of transformation or disappearance that affects traditional cultures, musical instruments and music frequently vanish last, as they draw from the very depths of the memory and needs of a community.[45]

Mediums

To understand the social context of tsymbaly, it is necessary to go back in time to the Old Country. Popular functions such as the *vesillia* (wedding) or *besidy* (social gatherings) in Galician, Bukovynian, and Transcarpathian regions of Ukraine required music for dancing. *Muzyky* (musicians), usually featuring the violin, tsymbaly, and drum (and sometimes *sopilky* or other instruments), were popular and considered obligatory at these functions.[46] This *muzyky* tradition was brought to Canada, where it continued its popular association with ritual and social events, most notably the wedding.[47]

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[42]Isajiw, "Symbols and Ukrainian Canadian Identity," p. 125.

[43]Humeniuk, *Ukrains'ki narodni muzychni instrumenty*; Lysenko, *Narodni muzychni instrumenty na Ukraini*; Khotkevych, *Muzychni instrumenty ukrains'koho narodu.*

[44]In taped interviews with John Babichuk, Smoky Lake, May and June 1984, he describes other musical instruments heard about from his father in early years in the community. He knows of no one actively pursuing these other musical instrument traditions today. As mentioned above, Woodsworth, *Ukrainian Rural Communities,* also documents early use of other Ukrainian musical instruments in parts of east central Alberta.

[45]Dournon, *Collection of Musical Instruments*, p. 9.

[46]Lysenko, *Narodni muzychni instrumenty na Ukraini*, p. 52; Ivanyts'kyi, "Muzyka ukrains'koho vesillia," p. 64.

[47]Klymasz, "Sounds You Never Before Heard," p. 377.

Figure 2. Ostashek wedding, Wasel, 1933, featuring traditional musicians. (Photograph courtesy of John Babichuk, Smoky Lake, and the Folklife Programme, Provincial Museum of Alberta)

The *muzyky* and tsymbaly had traditional roles in weddings in the 1930s, for example.[48] Before noon, the musicians would meet at the house of the bride's parents. As they escorted her to the church, they would play the wedding marches and ritual melodies to which people sang. After the church wedding, the musicians would again play music on the way back to the bride's parents' house. Particularly important was the wedding march as the bride entered the house. Music was also provided at dinner and later for dancing inside a granary or on a platform built outside (weather permitting).

Muzyky featuring tsymbaly continue to entertain until today, having evolved into Ukrainian country and western bands.[49] Orchestras such as the "Radomskys," "Prairie Pride," "Northern Troubadours," "Northern Kings," and "Starlights" are popular at weddings, anniversary celebrations, *Malanky* (New Year celebrations), and any other functions that require good dancing music with a traditional Ukrainian flavour.

The context of the tsymbaly has expanded beyond traditional events. The musical instrument is now a prime attraction at ethnic festivals in Dauphin, Manitoba; in Vegreville, Alberta; and in Vancouver, British Columbia.[50] In grandstand shows, tsymbaly find themselves freed from their traditional supportive role in bands, often appearing with other tsymbaly or alone as the main attraction.[51] On the festival grounds, builders display and sell their tsymbaly.[52] Players and builders gather to try them out and socialize, while their fans watch.

The tsymbaly competition is another new phenomenon which has evolved at the Dauphin, Manitoba and Vegreville festivals, and as an independent event at the Red Barn.[53] At the Red Barn competition, characterized as the "Western Canadian Championships,"[54] old and young players can meet and socialize. In 1983, prize money totalled $1,500 and the audience exceeded 2,500 people.[55] The audience is usually composed of family and friends who cheer for their favourite competitors or afficionados of the tsymbaly sound. During a competition there is a current of implicit and occasionally explicit affirmation and encouragement of continuity in tradition and identity.

> And you know, ladies and gentlemen, when we see a little fellow like this, learning the art of tsymbaly, ah, it makes me feel so good. This means that

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[48]Telephone interview with John Babichuk, September 1984. Also see the photograph, figure 2, of the Ostashek wedding, Wasel, 1933. Metro Babichuk is playing tsymbaly. John Babichuk's father is the violinist. The drummer arrived later in the wedding.

[49]Ukrainian country and western bands are defined in "Roles in music" below.

[50]Klymasz, "Ethnic Folk Festival," pp. 199-211.

[51]Slavko Nowytski, dir., *Refections of the Past* (Winnipeg: Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Centre, 1974) [film].

[52]Tsymbaly maker Nick Supervich has displayed his tsymbaly in Dauphin. Tom Chychul displays his tsymbaly annually at the Vegreville festival. Both festivals have featured tsymbaly competitions.

[53]The Red Barn is a popular country and western club in Bon Accord, Alberta.

[54]Taped interview with Steven Chwok, Edmonton, April 1983.

[55]Andrew Gregorovich, "Sweet Music of Ukrainian Tsymbaly," *Forum* 58 (1984), p. 32, reports that the Dauphin festival offers $1,200 in prizes.

your grandchildren fifty years from now will still be dancing to the sounds of Ukrainian tsymbaly at a Ukrainian wedding.[56]

One of the new ways the tsymbaly communicates to its audience is through recordings. Whereas previously tsymbaly were heard only at "events," now tsymbaly can be heard at any time on records, cassettes, and eight-track tapes.

A local record producer, Mr. Ken Huculak of Heritage Records, has produced over fifty recordings. Of these, he estimates that at least seventy percent feature tsymbaly. There are various types of recordings. "Event" records re-enact functions such as the tsymbaly competition or the ritual of a Ukrainian wedding. Other records promote "stars" and popular bands that have established reputations.

The popularity of tsymbaly on records is reflected by song titles such as "Duelling Dulcimers," "Dulcimer Polka," and "Dulcimer Delight."[57] Tsymbaly are also promoted on record titles, including *Award Winning Dulcimer Sounds*, *Dulcimer in Concert with Nick Mischi*, and *Dulcimer Sounds with the Northern Troubadours*.[58] Heritage Records' jingle, "If it's Heritage . . . It's Ours . . . It's Canadian," reflects a new, distinctive, highly streamlined affirmation of ethnicity.[59]

Ken Huculak markets his records at the Ukrainian Book Store and other locations in Edmonton, across Alberta, and throughout western Canada. He also sells them at festivals and competitions. The late owner of the Ukrainian Book Store in Edmonton estimated that Ukrainian country and western music outsells other kinds of Ukrainian music threefold or fourfold in his store.[60] One critic of Ukrainian popular music puts the ratio at at least five to one.[61]

The tsymbaly recordings are used in another "new" medium: radio. A Camrose, Alberta country radio station, CFCW, airs the "Ukrainian Hour" daily from 8:00 to 9:00 p.m. Currently hosted by Mr. R. Tompkins, the programme was started by popular announcer Dan Chomlak in 1959. It has drawn up to 12,800 listeners per night, or about 40,000 in the six nights a week it airs. This radio station regularly plays music featuring tsymbaly. Local band, records, and events associated with tsymbaly are also advertised.

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[56]On *Award Winning Dulcimer Sounds* (Heritage Records, HR 16, 1974), a recording of a competition at the Red Barn. The master of ceremonies, Dan Chomlak, was praising a young competitor and the tradition.

[57]Rhythm Kings, "Duelling Dulcimers," *Ukrainian Dance Time with the Rhythm Kings* (Heritage Records, HR 27, 1977); Pete Gargus and the Swingsters, "Dulcimer Polka," *Pete Gargus and the Swingsters* (Heritage Records, HR 31, 1979); Prairie Pride, "Dulcimer Delight," *Young Ukrainian Musicians* (Heritage Records, HR 38, 1983). See the discography.

[58]*Award Winning Dulcimer Sounds*; Nick Mischi, *Dulcimer in Concert with Nick Mischi* (Maple Haze, MH 7662, 1977); Northern Troubadours, *Dulcimer Sounds* (Heritage Records, HR 39, 1983).

[59]Telephone interview with Ken Huculak, May 1984; Ron Chalmers, "Ukrainian Music Takes on Pop Beat," *Edmonton Journal*, 9 July 1984, p. B8. Klymasz identifies the characteristics of the Canadianized folklore complex in *Ukrainian Folklore in Canada*, pp. 122-9.

[60]Telephone interview with Bohdan Melnychuk, May 1984.Telephone interview with Bohdan Melnychuk, May 1984.

[61]Bohdan Zajcew, "Ukrainian Popular Music in Canada," in *Visible Symbols*, p. 60.

> I am . . . promoting their various activities, be it the Dauphin or Vegreville Festivals or a local church *praznyk* . . . . I've been promoting at least a dozen things per week and this has been going on for years.[62]

The annual tsymbaly competition at the Red Barn has been sponsored by CFCW for over ten years.

All the aforementioned mediums; weddings and dances, recordings, and radio programmes, provide the context and audience for tsymbaly music and, by extension, tsymbaly players and builders. Cultural and spiritual values of the community are conveyed through musical tradition that preserves continuity and renews itself through change.[63] In this process, tsymbaly are actively promoted. The different mediums are not mutually exclusive, but rather are strongly linked to one another.

Roles in Music

Both tradition and adaptation are important factors in characterizing the tsymbaly's roles in music. The tsymbaly sound is significant to the community, particularly as regards ritual.

> Ritual provides a frame and a marked off time or place that alerts a special kind of expectancy. . . . Of all physical stimuli, sound is an ideal marker.[64]

As a musical instrument, tsymbaly enjoy characteristics of both the violin and drums. Tsymbaly produce melody as well as percussion, which make them effective producers of rhythm. Rhythm changes are more important than melody changes in denoting changes of mood.[65] This psychological effect of tsymbaly is reflected in folk song:

> Koby skrypky, tsymbaly
> To b i nizhky skakaly.
> (If there were a violin and tsymbaly,
> The feet would hop.)
>
> Oi zahraite tsymbaly
> Shchob nizhechky dryzhaly.
> (Play the tsymbaly
> So the feet might tremble.)[66]

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[62]Dan Chomlak as quoted in Andrij Makuch, "A Ukrainian Wolfman Jack," *Student*, August 1978, p. 9.

[63]Dournon, *Collection of Musical Instruments*, p. 5.

[64]Jackson, "Sound and Ritual," p. 296.

[65]Jackson, "Sound and Ritual," p. 297, states that ". . . external rhythmic stimulation affects the natural brain rhythms, thus giving rise in certain cases, to abnormal psychological states."

[66]Lysenko, *Narodni muzychni instrumenty na Ukraini*, p. 52; Khotkevych, *Muzychni instrumenty ukrains'koho narodu*, p. 160. [Translations are by M.B.]

In the traditional *muzyky* ensemble, tsymbaly were a secondary instrument. One would be hard pressed to find the original *muzyky* ensemble today, however it is possible to trace its evolution. One of the oldest bands of the prairies is the Radomsky Orchestra. Metro Radomsky is a violinist. His first group (over sixty years ago) consisted of a violin, tsymbaly, and drum. Over the years saxophones, accordians, and trumpets, as well as electric amplification were added in various combinations. The original instruments (violin, tsymbaly, and drum) still comprise the core of the group.[67]

Radomsky's band today represents a link between the original *muzyky* tradition and modern Ukrainian country and western music. It is a reflection of the dynamic process of continuity and change through which the tsymbaly tradition has survived. Proof of Radomsky's popularity lies in his busy schedule. The band plays three times a week, and is booked many months in advance for weddings and other functions.

The saying *"skrypka vede"* (the violin leads) reflects the fact that the violin was traditionally the main instrument in the ensemble.[68] In the New World, violins quickly became available at affordable prices.[69] As well, the violin was heard in contexts from outside the community's musical culture. As the violin became more common, it lost distinction as a cultural marker. The violin is no longer a unique visible and auditory symbol of Ukrainian identity.

Unlike the violin, the tsymbaly could not be readily bought or heard outside the Ukrainian community. To this day, the tsymbaly lend "a distinctive Old Country sound to any folk music item that is especially obligatory in the performance of Ukrainian wedding music."[70] Over time, tsymbaly have been identified as a cultural marker of Ukrainian people in rural western Canada. In the orchestra "Prairie Pride," it is the tsymbaly player and the tsymbaly that lead the ensemble.[71] The role of the instrument in the ensemble has changed as its visibility increases in the musical life of the community.

The changing role of tsymbaly can also be expressed in musical terms.[72] There is a marked contrast between the musical styles of Mr. Nick Mischi, who learned to play in the Old Country, and Mr. Steven Chwok, a popular young player.[73]

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[67]Taped interview with Metro Radomsky, Andrew, July 1984; "Metro Radomsky: Orchestra Leader of Ukrainian Country Music," *Forum* 47 (1981), pp. 8-10.

[68]This phrase was echoed in a taped interview with Metro Radomsky, Andrew, July 1984, and a personal interview with Nick Mischi, Edmonton, July 1984. Radomsky is a violinist who has led an orchestra for sixty-two years. Mischi has played tsymbaly for seventy-two years.

[69]Tsymbaly makers John Babichuk and Tom Chychul each own "Stradivarius" violins, made in Czechoslovakia, which were once sold by the thousands on the prairies.

[70]Klymasz, "Sounds You Never Before Heard," p. 377.

[71]Prairie Pride, *Young Ukrainian Musicians* (Heritage Records, HR 38, 1983) features tsymbaly player Steven Chwok.

[72]Leon Dallin, *Listener's Guide to Musical Understanding*, 4th ed. (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 1977), pp. 116-7.

[73]Nick Mischi provided the initial characterization of old and new styles. He was one of three judges at the 1984 CFCW tsymbaly competition at the Red Barn. Mischi can be heard on Marangos, *Authentic Ukrainian Music and Song with Nick Mischi* (Heritage Records, HR 36, 1982). Steven Chwok won the 1984 CFCW tsymbaly competition. He can be heard on Prairie Pride, *Young Ukrainian Musicians*.

Mischi integrates vertical as well as horizontal musical textures into his playing. He produces a rhythmic and harmonic blend suitable for supporting the traditional "lead" of a violin and the rhythm of the drum. As more instruments have been added to the orchestra, the need for tsymbaly to fill in harmony as a secondary instrument has perhaps been diminished. In the tsymbaly's new role as a "lead" instrument, there is a greater emphasis on the homophonic, horizontal, melodic musical line. A player such as Chwok concentrates on melody, rhythm, and speed more than intricate harmonies in his musical expression.

As the Ukrainian language is forgotten by succeeding generations, the tsymbaly's non-verbal nature offers a unique way of communicating culture and identity.[74]

Related Musical Traditions

In western Canada, a tsymbaly tradition has developed largely independent of other related musical trends. These other trends include (1) present Soviet tsymbaly playing styles, (2) music of the post-World War II Ukrainian immigration to Canada, and (3) the hammered dulcimer tradition in North America.

Present-day Soviet Ukrainian "folk" activity places emphasis on the "classical" capabilities of concert tsymbaly. Soviet scholarship claims that "*kontsertovi tsymbaly - tekhnichno doskonalyi suchasnyi ukrains'kyi narodnyi instrument*" (concert tsymbaly are a technically advanced modern Ukrainian folk instrument).[75] The officially sanctioned efforts at elevating tsymbaly to the sphere of elite music may well divorce the instrument from its traditional contexts.[76] The repertoire of the Soviet tsymbaly player is likely to stress artistic works by Soviet composers: instrumental solos, "songs of the proletariat," choir pieces, segments of oratorios, and cantatas.[77] In contrast, the tsymbaly phenomenon of western Canada has evolved spontaneously, rather than from conscious manipulation.

Post-World War II Ukrainian immigrants to Canada generally represent a different mind set from earlier Ukrainian Canadians. They live primarily in cities and are often unaware of the established rural Ukrainian Canadian culture on the prairies. A 1979 concert programme from Vancouver suggests that tsymbaly were

> . . . a favourite instrument of many of Canada's early Ukrainian settlers. Today, however, the only stringed instrument still actively being utilized in the Ukrainian community is the bandura.[78]

Similar sentiments about the demise of tsymbaly prevail in a recent article concerning the tsymbaly competition in Dauphin:

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[74]Klymasz, "Sounds You Never Before Heard," p. 378.

[75]Mykhailo Lysenko, "Tsymbaly," *Narodna tvorchist' ta etnohrafiia*, no. 5 (1968), pp. 54-5.

[76]Robert B. Klymasz, "Folklore Politics in the Soviet Ukraine," in *Folklore, Nationalism and Politics*, ed. Felix J. Oinas (Columbus: Slavica Publishers, 1978), pp. 97-108.

[77]Nezovybat'ko, *Ukrains'ki tsymbaly*, pp. 48-55.

[78]*krainian Festival '79*, Queen Elizabeth Theatre Programme (Vancouver: Ukrainian Canadian Committee, 13 May 1979), n.p.

> . . . this part of the Ukrainian musical heritage [tsymbaly playing M.B.] is now in peril of gradually disappearing. Perhaps the tremendously successful bandura groups could provide some assistance in helping to organize and establishing again the sweet music of the tsymbaly of Ukraine.[79]

Contrary to the above suggestion, tsymbaly are not in imminent danger of disappearing in western Canada. The tradition continues with descendants of the first immigrants.

The tsymbaly phenomenon has also had few direct contacts with the hammered dulcimer tradition in North America. This may be partially due to the wane of the dulcimer's popularity in North America at the beginning of the century. Had hammered dulcimers been readily available in western Canada (as was the case with the violin), the distinctive role of the tsymbaly as a cultural marker may not have evolved.

This is not to say that present-day practitioners of the tsymbaly art are not aware of the North American hammered dulcimer. Several craftsmen have investigated hammered dulcimers through available literature.[80] Still, the tsymbaly tradition remains minimally influenced. None of the informants recalls actually seeing or hearing other North American hammered dulcimers first-hand. Likewise, a survey of literature in North America suggests that the hammered dulcimer tradition is relatively oblivious to the tsymbaly phenomenon in western Canada.[81]

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[79]Gregorovich, "Sweet Music of Ukrainian Tsymbaly," p. 32.

[80]Nick Supervich and Tom Chychul, for example, have sent for Sam Rizetta, *Hammer Dulcimer History and Playing*, Leaflet 72-4 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1972), Rizetta, *Making a Hammer Dulcimer*, Mason, *How to Build a Hammer Dulcimer*, and Phillip Mason, *The Hammered Dulcimer Instruction Book* (Washington, D.C.: Communications Press, 1977). In a taped interview with Nick Supervich, Edmonton, fall 1983, he claimed that the tsymbaly tradition is technically ahead of its North American cousins. Chychul learned of Mason's works from Paul Budniak, and later lent them to Supervich. Supervich probably learned of the Smithsonian publications through one of the bibliographies which mention the availability of the Rizetta publications free of charge.

[81]Stein, *Hammered Dulcimer*, pp. 1-5.

Figure 3. Tom Chychul marketing his tsymbaly at the Vegreville Pysanka Festival, July 1984. (Photograph by Mark Bandera)

TOM CHYCHUL: CASE STUDY OF A TSYMBALY MAKER

The tsymbaly craftsman is a critical participant in the changing tsymbaly tradition. The musical and extra-musical characteristics of the instrument depend on the maker's memory of the tradition, as well as individual tastes and interpretations.[1] The maker is also responsible for introducing the musical instrument into the community. The audience to which he caters includes fans of Ukrainian country and western music, players, other craftsmen, and, of course, himself.

Tom Chychul, aged sixty-three, has built seventy-five tsymbaly to date and provides a representative profile of the tsymbaly craftsman in east central Alberta.[2] Chychul was not brought up making tsymbaly. When interviewed, he was a farmer working seventy-eight acres of land just north of Tofield, Alberta, sixty miles east of the city of Edmonton. In the past he has worked as a mechanic, as a woodworker, and as an employee in a packing plant. He is very talented with his hands and occasionally fixes farm machinery for neighbours.

Tradition

Clues to Chychul's motivations can be found in his family background. He is very proud of the musical tradition of his family. Mr. Chychul points to the back of a 1966 recording, where it is written that in "Chychul's family music dates back many, many years."[3] Tom Chychul's father also played the tsymbaly.[4] His brother played tsymbaly with the Northern Troubadour band on "Zelisko" tsymbaly.[5] The Northern Troubadours have even recorded the "Chychul Polka."[6]

Chychul remembers that his father's uncle used to build tsymbaly, and that these tsymbaly were slightly larger than the standard in western Canada today.[7] He is convinced that his father's uncle learned the craft in the Old Country.

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1 Toelken, *Dynamics of Folklore*, p. 111.

2 Six videotaped interviews held with Tom Chychul, July 1984; Personal interviews with Tom Chychul at the Vegreville "Pysanka" Festival, July 1983, 1984; A personal interview with Tom Chychul, Tofield, April 1984; Toelken, *Dynamics of Folklore,* pp. 110-2, provides a description of a tsymbaly maker whose profile is similar to Chychul's.

3 Northern Troubadours, *Northern Troubadours* (QC 483, 1966).

4 Tom Chychul's father is from Sniatyn, in the Pokuttia region of Ukraine.

5 See "'It All Started in Andrew,'" below, for a discussion of John Zelisko, an important tsymbaly maker.

6 Northern Troubadours, "Chychul Polka," *Northern Troubadours* (Heritage Records, HR 32, 1967).

7 See "Old versus New."

The first time Tom Chychul saw tsymbaly was at a wedding in 1927 when he was six years old. He remembers a tsymbaly player playing the wedding march. That night, while Chychul was sleeping in his father's cousin's attic, a cat walked over the tsymbaly, frightening him.[8]

Chychul looks at his art as continuing a family tradition, though he is also aware of the origins of the tradition in a broader sense. He tells his audience that tsymbaly are a very old form of instrument, dating back at least seven or eight hundred years in Ukraine.[9] He knows that other cultures have dulcimers, and, after having seen a television show, says that *"Chainameny maiut 'Suzuki' tsymbaly"* (the Chinese have 'Suzuki' tsymbaly).[10]

From his childhood, from socializing with other builders, and from reading, Chychul knows that the tsymbaly art was once a gypsy tradition,[11] and that tsymbaly were made differently than today. Pieces of wood were cut with an axe, threadless wooden pegs were hammered into the instrument, strings were made of gut, and no nails were used. Tsymbaly were not decorated the way he ornaments them today.

Chychul recounts that when he first started making tsymbaly, he used an axe to plane the top board. He feels confident that, if called upon, he could make tsymbaly in the traditional way.

Tom Chychul as Player

Tom Chychul also plays the tsymbaly. Not all builders in the area can play. Chychul owns five trophies won for his talents. The first one was given to him eight years ago at a variety show at the Beverly League in Edmonton. In 1978 at the CFCW tsymbaly competition, Dan Chomlak gave him a special trophy *"tomu shcho hrav na svoikh tsymbalakh"* (because he played on tsymbaly he made himself). In 1979 at the CFCW competition, he won another award for the same reason. Finally, in June 1984, he won an amateur night competition at the Lavoy Hotel.

Chychul practices by taping songs he likes from CFCW's "Ukrainian Hour" and playing along with them. As he plays, he keeps time with his foot. If his dog "Hippy" is in the area, he invariably joins in singing. For Mr. Chychul, being able to play reflects his musical tradition. It is also an important dimension of himself as a complete tsymbaly maker.[12]

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[8] For a comparable folk narrative about a fearless man who is scared to death by the sound of tsymbaly, see "Cholovik bez strakhu i upyr," in *Etnohrafichni materialy z Uhors'koi Rusi*, ed. Volodymyr Hnatiuk, *Etnohrafichnyi zbirnyk* 1 (Lviv: Naukove tovarystvo im. Shevchenka, 1897), pp. 5-8.

[9] Humeniuk, *Ukrains'ki narodni muzychni instrumenty*, pp. 106-7, claims that tsymbaly may have existed in Ukraine as early as the twelfth century and only became popularized about the fifteenth century.

[10] In this humorous characterization, Chychul consciously describes another culture's dulcimer using the Ukrainian term "tsymbaly."

[11] Béla Bartók, *Essays*, ed. Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), p. 62, in an essay written in 1924, states that the musical instrument "became localized in Hungary and neighbouring districts during the last 200-300 years," and until recently "was used exclusively by gypsies." Gypsy players are illustrated in Sárosi, *Gypsy Music*, plates 13-22.

[12] Chychul uses his playing skills to help sell tsymbaly.

Tom Chychul as Craftsman

Most of the tsymbaly making process is a solitary activity. An exception is the gathering of materials. Chychul buys from Bill Lutyck in Willingdon, George's Bicycle Shop, the Ukrainian Book Store, and Prudham's in Edmonton. He used to buy from Clark's Lumber Yard, where he was well known, but it has since gone out of business. Going for supplies gives Chychul the opportunity to socialize, go into town, and visit friends.

Chychul makes tsymbaly in a garage on his farm. He enjoys spending long hours on his craft. His wife often brings him meals to the garage so that his work is not interrupted. Usually, the radio plays in the background, often CFCW's "Ukrainian Hour." As Tom Chychul says, *"z muzykoiu nailipshe robyty"* (one works best with music). In winter the garage is heated with a woodburning stove.

The garage could be described as neatly cluttered. Rough wood is stacked just inside the garage door. Various forms and jigs hang on the wall. At the end stands an electric table saw which also acts as the workbench on which most of the work is done. Another workbench filled with tools and supplies stands against the wall. More wood, forms, and a set of tsymbaly bought forty-three years ago are stored in the rafters.[13]

Tom Chychul judges his tsymbaly by referring to an inherent system of culture-based knowledge, as well as his own sense of aesthetics and invention.[14]

Chychul has invented processes and forms to make the work efficient. These range from patterns of various pieces to jigs for drilling entire rows at one time. He proudly calls his inventions *"mii paténт"* (my patent). Efficiency is also seen in the fact that he often works on more than one tsymbaly at a time.

As Chychul has become more proficient, his designs have become bolder. His early tsymbaly show little or no ornamentation. Five years ago he began experimenting with various patterns and colours of reflective decals *"aby faino blyshchilo"* (that it might glitter nicely) under lights on stage.

Practical design considerations are investigated by modifying placements of *pidpory* (supporting bridges), raising or lowering the *konyky* (top bridges), or changing the type of wood used or its thickness. He is curious to see how changes might affect the sound and structural integrity of the musical instrument and how he might improve them.

Chychul first learned to make tsymbaly from Harry Pidladsky, a hotel operator in Chipman, Alberta. He also copied designs of other tsymbaly builders, most notably from John Zelisko of Andrew, Alberta.[15]

Once he learned to make tsymbaly, Chychul found himself part of a loose-knit community of tsymbaly craftsmen in the area. He enjoys the social interaction within this group; comparing knowledge, trading secrets, and competing. His favourite craftsman is Nick Supervich, and they often spend time together.[16]

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[13] Chychul bought these tsymbaly in Edmonton. He believes they were made three years earlier, but does not remember the maker's name. He has partially rebuilt them.

[14] Toelken, *Dynamics of Folklore*, pp. 110-12, depicts a tsymbaly maker who is isolated from other members of the tradition and relies on memory.

[15] See "It All Started in Andrew'" below.

[16] Nick Supervich, of Edmonton, is a master carpenter. This skill is reflected in the construction of his tsymbaly. Chychul, however, notes that Supervich does not play the instrument.

As an established tsymbaly maker, Chychul continues the tradition by passing on his expertise to others. He tells the story of one unnamed novice tsymbaly maker who could not understand why the tsymbaly would not tune. Chychul showed him where to place the top bridges and solved the problem. Bill Kolody is an eighty year old tsymbaly maker from Willingdon. Chychul is helping him by lending forms and offering his knowledge. Chychul remembers that his own first tsymbaly were not very successful. Helping novices reminds Chychul of his own initial attempts and reinforces his present status as a master craftsman.[17]

Tom Chychul's Lore

Chychul knows many traditional sayings related to making tsymbaly.

While working, Mr. Chychul regularly leaves a margin of error in his work that necessitates much trimming, filing, and cutting. He explains the reason for his method with this saying: *"Miryv, miryv, miryv --i shche zakorotko"* (I measured, measured, measured - and it's still too short). Once a piece is cut too short, it cannot be made longer; but if a piece is a bit long, it can still be made to fit.

Care taken before and during the fitting of two pieces together is explained this way: *"Treba desiat raz miryty, raz pylyty - abo raz miryty, desiat raz pylyty"* (One must measure ten times and cut once, or measure once and cut ten times).

Much of the finishing work is time consuming and repetitive, involving a great deal of trimming, filing, and sanding. A blacksmith's saying was used while sanding a piece of work: *"Hriv, hriv zelizo, zrobylos' z toho pich i bil'she nicho"* (Iron was heated, heated, until the forge was left and nothing else). He realizes that at some point, one must finish and continue on with the next step.

He wryly remarks that *"Khlop na starosti hraiet'sia z tsymbalamy"* (A fellow in his old age is playing with tsymbaly). Though proud of his work, he keeps his art in perspective and is not above joking about himself. In a similar context, he says: *"Chasom zlostyt"* (Sometimes it frustrates).

Chychul's efforts not always successful:

> Chasom ne vdast'. To tak . . . Z tsymbalamy iak ta rizchyna . . . na khlib z toi samoi muky. Odna rizchyna bula dobra, a druha ne bula dobra. Ia raz buduvav try sety [tsymbaliv] na raz, i ne bulo shchoby bulo dva sety shchoby buv odyn holos. Kozhen mav inakshyi holos.
> (Sometimes it does not succeed. With tsymbaly it is as with leavened dough for bread from the same flour. One piece of leavened dough was good and the other was not. I once built three sets of tsymbaly at once, and no two sets sounded alike. Each had a different sound.)

Confident of himself as a good tsymbaly maker, Chychul still understands that his own skills are not always sufficient to guarantee a uniformly successful outcome.

Displaying defective tuning pegs, Chychul remarked, *"Shcho take psy idiat, a shcho dobre liudy"* (Dogs eat things like this, but people eat good things). His expertise allows him to judge the materials needed in his craft.

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[17] Chychul complains of a few other makers who refuse to share secrets.

Tom Chychul's sayings reflect a time-proven and pragmatic philosophy. Both humorous and practical, the sayings suggest means of coping with both positive and negative aspects of tsymbaly making.

Tom Chychul as Salesman

Chychul is a master seller. As he is well known in the area for his craft, much of his selling involves word of mouth advertising. In July 1984, Chychul sold an instrument to a Norwegian lady from Milhurst, Saskatchewan for $500. This lady and her husband had been attending Ukrainian dances, liked the music, and wanted to acquire one of the tsymbaly. They first looked for one in Edmonton, finally heard about Mr. Chychul by word of mouth, visited him, and bought one.

When a buyer comes to him, Chychul works like a car salesman.[18] He takes out the tsymbaly one at a time, commenting on styling and sound. While he demonstrates a tune, he asks for the buyers' opinion: *"Kotryi holos lipshyi?"* (Which has a better sound?), *"Iak faino blyshchyt"* (How nicely it shines). In doing so, he brings buyers' attention to the positive attributes of each instrument.

Mr. Chychul also sells at events. At the Vegreville Pysanka Festival, Chychul is an annual participant. He sits in the middle of the pavilion, four or five instruments displayed around him, playing tsymbaly amplified with a pickup. Occasionally, competitors from the tsymbaly competition or other players drop by to talk and try them. People passing by stop and listen. Friends and other builders pause to chat. He also takes his tsymbaly to auctions, competitions, and concerts.

When a beginner wants to buy an instrument, Chychul provides a tuning scheme that fits under the strings and shows the player the notes.[19] In addition, he has written out songs (indicating left side, right, or base strings and the notes) in order to make it easier to play.

Chychul willingly barters with prospective buyers. Often his asking price of $500 to $1,000 can be talked down. When asked how much a particular newly-made instrument would cost, Chychul answered, *"O, za tykh mozhe tysiachu, mozhe menshe; zalezhyt khto kupuie, skil'ky budemo torhuvaty"* (Oh, maybe a thousand for those, maybe less; it depends who's buying, how much we'll bargain). In addition, he will take almost anything in trade. For people he knows, he will even arrange an installment plan. Cash is always preferred.

Rather than his original price of $350, he once sold a set of tsymbaly for $300 and an old instrument in trade. The old instrument was subsequently resold for $100, an extra fifty dollars profit. In another sale, however, an old instrument was taken in trade allowing $250 and resold for a $100 loss. He has also allowed an accordion in trade and was once offered a horse, but decided he did not need it.

For his best trade, Chychul went to Frontier Chrysler in Vegreville in 1982. There he bought a 1979 Ford F150 red pickup truck priced at $3,500. Chychul paid for it with three sets of tsymbaly and $500. He has since driven 40,000 kilometres with the truck. (The dealer wanted one instrument for his father, one for himself, and one to sell.)

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[18] Chychul himself makes this characterization.

[19] See figure 3.

L	R	B	L	R	B
C				C	
G				D	
	E			E-2	
	C-2		C		
A			B		
G			A		
	F		G		
	E			F-3	
	D-2			E	
B-2				D	
A					G-2
G				B-2	
B				D-2	
G			B		
	F		A		
	E		G		
	D			F	
	C-2			E-2	
		G-2		D-2	
	C			C-2	
	D				
	E-2				
		G-2			

Figure 4. Notation for a "Wedding March" devised by Tom Chychul.

Tom Chychul is a businessman. When at the Vegreville festival, someone yelled, *"Hrai, abo hroshi viddai!"* (Play or give back the money!),[20] he retorted, *"Shche nikhto ne dav!"* (Nobody has given any yet!). Mr. Chychul is keen to bargain and barter, but somewhat resentful of people who want something for nothing. He prices his tsymbaly for what he thinks they are worth and what the market will bear. He realizes that other builders charge more for tsymbaly, but money is not his only consideration.

When asked if he spent so much time and care while making tsymbaly because customers demanded it, he said no. Customers are interested more in the sound. He says he makes them, *"bo ia khochu aby mene khvalyly, shcho dobri tsymbaly robliu"* (because I want to be praised for making good tsymbaly). Much of Mr. Chychul's incentive can be characterized by pride in tradition and pride in himself.

[20] This common proverb reflects the tradition of throwing money into the instrument as a means of payment for a musician's services.

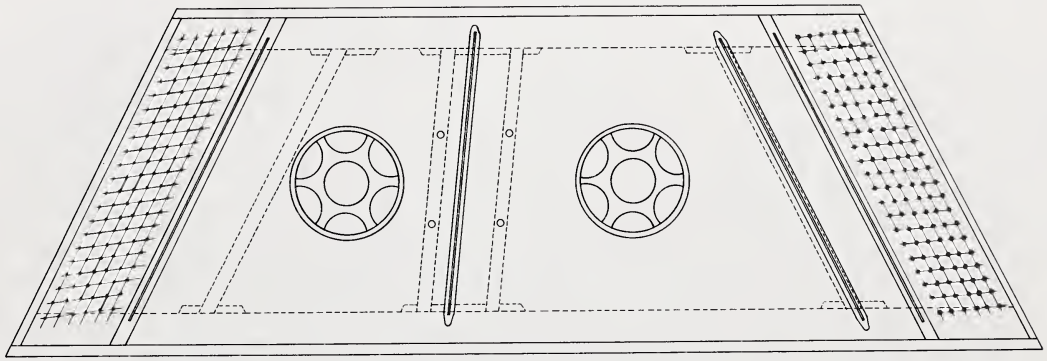

Figure 5. Basic design of Chychul tsymbaly. Specific features and measurements can vary.

CONSTRUCTING TSYMBALY

Mr. Tom Chychul was filmed making a set of tsymbaly for six days over a period of two weeks in July 1984.[1] The construction process is presented here in discrete stages, though the steps overlapped in actual practice.

Constructing tsymbaly involves: making a skeleton frame, preparing a bottom board, covering the skeleton frame with a maple facing, inserting dowels from the back of the frame into the side blocks, making supporting bridges, painting, adding ornamentation, preparing the side blocks for pegs and pins, making top bridges and preparing a top board, making sound holes, fitting the top board, making playing sticks, stringing the instrument, tuning, and making a tuning key.

Basic materials include: wood, nails, glue, wire, bicycle spokes, pegs, paint, and acrylic finish. Rough maple, oak, and sitka spruce as well as cedar siding and birch plywood are bought at Prudham's building supply in Edmonton. Finishing nails are bought at 3/4 inch and 1 1/2 inch sizes. Sometimes he uses 1 1/4 inch nails. Chychul prefers Elmer's Carpenter's Glue. Wire is bought from Bill Lutyck in Willingdon. Pegs are also sometimes obtained from Bill Lutyck. Bicycle spokes are found at George's Bicycle Shop in Edmonton. Paint and acrylic finish are bought in spray cans.

Chychul uses an array of electric and hand tools. Electric tools include a table saw, drill press, hand-held drills, planer, sabre saw, grindstone, and sanders. Manual tools include a crosscut saw, hacksaw, drill, hammer, chisel, files, sanders, clamps, and pliers.

Chychul has a blueprint of his tsymbaly design which was drafted in 1979. He rarely refers to it when making his tsymbaly, however, and in practice incorporates various deviations from the plan. He generally cuts each piece of wood wider and longer than needed, then trims, planes, and sands the boards to their final dimensions. The final shape and size of each piece relates more closely to the other parts of the instrument than to any predefined linear measure. The pieces fit well with each other in any given instrument, though they may vary quite a bit from one instrument to the next. The measurements given in the following descriptions are, therefore, necessarily approximate.

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[1]Eleven VHS format video tapes of Mr. Chychul making tsymbaly are being held at the Ukrainian Folklore Archives, Department of Slavic and East European Studies, University of Alberta.

Skeleton Frame

The skeleton frame, on which most of the strength of the musical instrument depends, consists of four basic pieces. These are *kovbany* (side blocks) into which the pins and pegs will be mounted, a *perednia doshka* (front board), and a shorter parallel *zadnia doshka* (back board).

The side blocks require the most work and are prepared first. Two pieces of maple are cut to approximately 16 inches long and 4 inches high by 2 7/8 inches wide. The top and bottom are then cut at an 18° angle (from horizontal). The new sides measure approximately 2 1/4 inches. A small board, measuring 16 inches by 3/8 inch by 1 7/8 inches, is glued and nailed to the side of each side block. These boards will be located on the inside of the tsymbaly frame and will serve as lips for the top board. The boards are clamped in place until the glue dries.

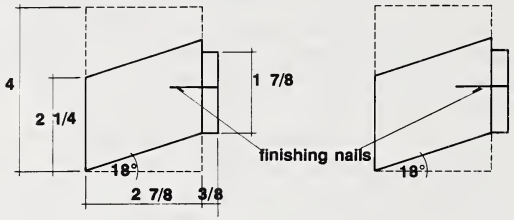

Figure 6. Side blocks for the skeleton frame, step 1. (End view)

Pressing the 2 1/4 inch sides against the vertical guide of the table saw, Chychul then cuts each end of the side blocks to 27° from square. The lengths are thus reduced to 13 3/8 inches.

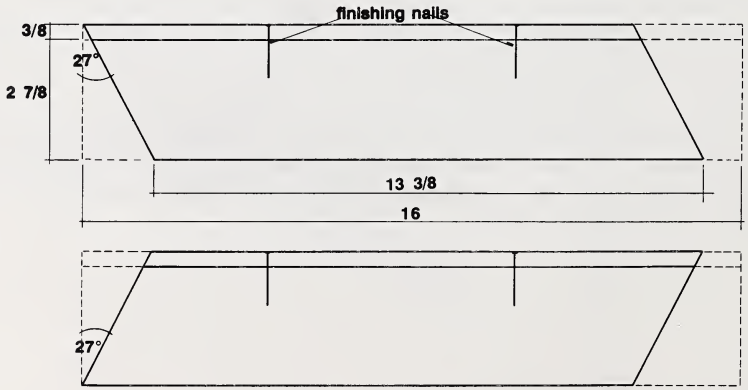

Figure 7. Side blocks for the skeleton frame, step 2. (Top view)

The bottom of each side block is established next. This is done by making three cuts with the table saw, creating a notch 1/4 inch deep and 2 1/4 inches wide into which the bottom board of the tsymbaly will eventually fit. As necessary, an additional wedge of wood cut at an angle of 73° is placed next to the saw's guide to stabilize the block as it is pushed past the blade.

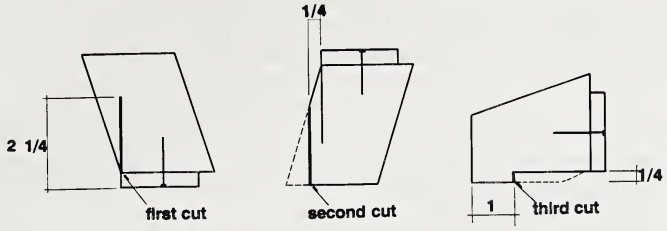

Figure 8. Side block for the skeleton frame, step 3; three cuts made with the table saw to establish the bottom surface and lip. (End view)

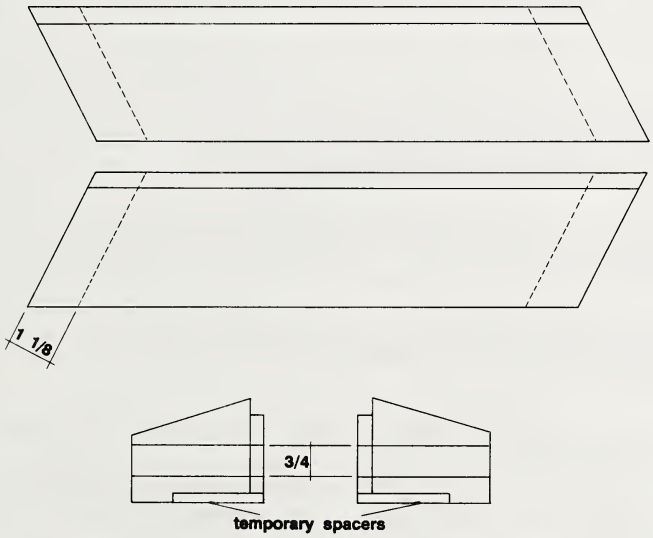

Figure 9. Side blocks for the skeleton frame, step 4; joints cut into the ends. (Top and end views)

The bottom notch is temporarily filled with a 1/4 inch spacer (secured with two 3/4 inch finishing nails) designed to keep the bottom piece flush while working.

Zamky (joints, literally locks), must be made on each end of both side blocks for affixing the front and back boards. These are cut from the block using a gato blade. The joints are 3/4 inch wide and 1 1/8 inches deep.

The front board and back board are made of oak. They begin as two long pieces 1 7/8 inches tall and 1 1/8 inches wide.[2] The boards used for the front and back are cut to show a vertical grain for maximum strength. When finished, the back will be 18 3/4 long and the front piece 28 7/16 inches long excluding the joints. These lengths are measured from the inside corners of the side blocks because the dimensions of the sound board and inner area of the frame are the critical factors in determining the musical characteristics of the instrument.

The front piece is planed on top to provide a slightly convex curvature. This is said to provide added strength and resistance against the tension of the strings.

The two pieces are measured and the four ends for the *kliuchi* (joints, literally keys) are cut out. The joints are allowed to remain extra long and are trimmed only after the skeleton frame is joined.

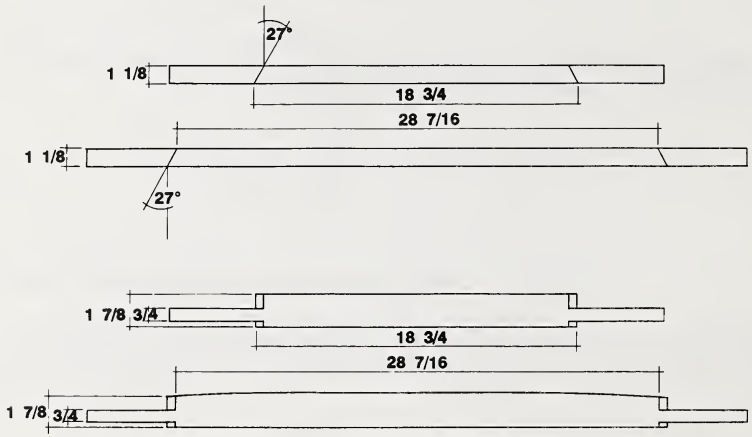

Figure 10. Front and back boards ready for fitting into the joint. (Top and side views)

While connecting the pieces, the joints are periodically filed down until the desired fit is attained.

After the pieces are fitted, they are glued together with Elmer's glue, which Chychul calls *karuk*.[3] The extra ends of the front and back boards are cut off with the electric saw.

Though obviously a critical phase of construction, as so much of the tsymbaly's strength depends on it, the frame takes Mr. Chychul only about two hours to construct. Because the skeleton frame will eventually be completely covered and hidden from sight, it perhaps does not require the fine finishing which is so time-consuming for other steps.

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[2]Chychul sometimes makes the front board 1 1/4 inches wide for added strength.

[3]Literally carpenter's glue. In the Old Country, this was usually an animal glue.

The next day, after the carpenter's glue has dried, the protruding edges of the joints are planed, belt sanded, and hand sanded until flush.

Spidnia doshka (Bottom Board)

Though Mr. Chychul has used maple and ribbon mahogany plywood for the bottom board, he now prefers birch plywood. He feels that birch provides the optimum combination of good sound and strength. He prefers the grain to go vertically, as this allows him to use the plywood sheet most efficiently.

The birch plywood is measured with a trapezoidal pattern of the bottom board, marked with a large square, and cut on the table saw. The back piece must be perfectly symmetrical or the tsymbaly will never tune properly. To check for symmetry, the board is flipped over. It should fit equally well both ways. The board is also purposely left too wide at the front and back to allow for trimming.

The piece is positioned and glued, then nailed with 3/4 inch finishing nails. A wooden frame is put over the instrument to provide even pressure, and three clamps are applied per side while the glue dries.

Facing

The skeleton frame is completely covered before the tsymbaly are finished. The four sides are covered by maple facings.

First, a 1/4 inch board of black maple is placed over the side of each side block. The top edge of this board is angled at 18° to match the angle of the side block. A small piece of arborite is used to check that the top of the maple board lies flush with the side block.

The pieces are glued, and two 3/4 inch finishing nails are used to secure them in place. The frame is put in a vise and clamped. When the glue has dried, the process is repeated on the other end of the frame. The sides and bottom are later trimmed with the table saw, files, and sanders.

Two pieces of black maple which will serve as the front and back facings of the tsymbaly are then cut from rough lumber with the table saw to dimensions of 40 inches long, 3/8 inch thick and 2 5/8 inches high. They are trimmed with an electric planer and hand sanded. Their ends will later be trimmed again.

The facing for the front board is planed to provide a slightly convex top. The bottom of the skeleton frame and board are checked for a flush fit. An electric sander is used to eliminate any uneven spots.

Elmer's glue is spread on the front of the skeleton frame and the respective maple facing is put over it. It extends higher than the skeleton frame to provide an edge against which the top board will butt.

A piece of wood is placed over the maple facing to distribute pressure from clamping evenly. Three clamps per side are used. In addition, chips of wood are inserted at the ends to ensure a tight fit. As the clamps are slowly tightened, a hammer is used to tap the maple facing in a final adjustment. The same procedure is repeated for the back facing. After the front and back facings have dried, the ends are trimmed off with the table saw, files, and sanders.

Once the facings are attached, the side blocks are tapered with the table saw. The bottom edges of the side blocks are angled and the bottom corners are rounded. The edges are filed and sanded again.

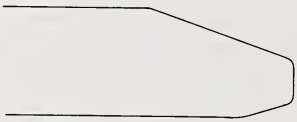

Figure 11. Tapered corner of the instrument.

According to Chychul, tapering the side blocks makes the instrument lighter, easier to remove from its case, and provides an aesthetically pleasing styling.

Dowels

Wooden dowels (pegs) may be inserted into the side blocks at the back of the instrument in order to strengthen the structure. This step is optional, and Chychul says a well-built instrument does not really need it. Screws could also have been used in their stead.

Three holes, 1 inch deep and 5/16 inch wide, are drilled in a triangular pattern into the left and right sides of the back facings.

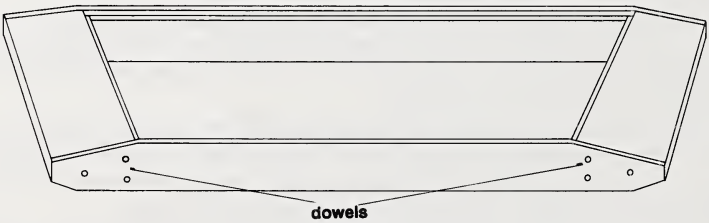

Figure 12. Dowels inserted through the back into the side blocks.

Six pieces of maple are cut into the shape of dowels and filed down to fit very snugly into the holes. The pieces, cut slightly long, are hammered into the instrument. The ends are cut off and sanded with the electric sander until flush.[4]

[4]As mentioned, Chychul does not always include this feature. In this case, he included it for demonstrative purposes. He later covers the dowels with decals. See "Ornamentation" below.

Pidpory (Supporting Bridges)

The strings of the finished tsymbaly are suspended above the surface of the instrument by two bridges which rest on the top board. These top bridges and the top board itself rest in turn on three or sometimes four supporting bridges located inside the cavity of the instrument. These supporting bridges are built and installed once the frame of the instrument is completed.

The placement of the supporting bridges is initially determined by comparison with other tsymbaly. Two supporting bridges are lined up approximately 2 inches apart, parallel to and below the position of the centre top bridge. They are set some 10 1/4 inches and 12 1/4 inches from the left end of the front board and some 6 1/4 inches and 8 1/4 inches from the left end of shorter back board.[5] The supporting bridge on the right side is placed some 1 3/4 inches away from the side block and parallel to it. Sometimes Chychul adds a fourth supporting bridge. The tsymbaly built for this project feature a fourth supporting bridge on the left side whereas Chychul's 1979 blueprint includes a fourth bridge on the right side under the right top bridge. The placement of the supporting bridges, then, can vary from instrument to instrument.

The ends of each supporting bridge rest on specially prepared lips on the inside of the frame. The lips are made of maple approximately 2 1/2 inches long, 1/4 inch wide, and 1 1/4 inches tall, leaving 5/8 inch from the top of the tsymbaly frame.

The supporting bridges themselves are made of sitka spruce. Each bridge is 1/2 inch wide and 1 inch high. The centre bridges are about 10 3/4 inches long, while the side bridge measures approximately 11 3/4 inches, as is required to fit snugly from the front to the back of the instrument's cavity at the appropriate angle in each case. As with many of the pieces, the ends are cut at the appropriate angle and length by measuring and marking on the actual instrument rather than from predetermined plans.

The top of each bridge is planed to be slightly convex. This helps support the top board better and keeps it from buckling.

A 1/4 inch section is cut out at the bottom corners of each bridge to fit onto the lip. The height of the cut-out corners is adjusted so that the top of the bridge rests level with the front and back boards.

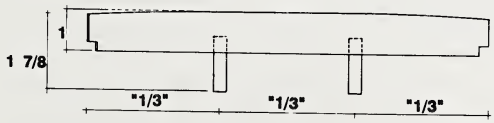

Figure 13. Supporting bridge with sound posts.

Pidstavky (sound posts) are then built into the bridges at 1/3 the distance from each end to provide additional support. After their locations are marked, they are checked against the appropriate top bridges.

[5]See figures 5 and 16.

Each sound post should be located below an opening in the corresponding top bridge. Holes 5/16 inch in diameter are drilled 3/8 inch deep into the supporting bridges. A drop of carpenter's glue is placed in the holes and the spruce (or sometimes maple) posts are driven in. Placing the supporting bridge upside down into the frame, the required height is marked on each sound post. The excess length is cut off. Using a finishing nail for a drill bit, holes are drilled at an angle from the sides of the bridge into the sound posts. The posts are tacked securely into place with 1 1/4 inch finishing nails.

The bridges themselves are tacked to the tsymbaly frame in the same manner. No glue is used, however, in case it should someday be necessary to move or replace them.

Paint

In the past, Chychul has used a variety of stains, oils, and varnishes to finish his instruments. He now chooses a "sunfire" design, copied from Nick Supervich.

A temporary top board is tacked onto the instrument to keep paint from marking the inside. The instrument is placed on top of a small box, and painting is begun. Dark brown and lighter brown or brown-orange spray paints are used. The lighter coloured paint is applied first. After the top and sides are sprayed, the instrument is turned over and the bottom is painted.

The darker paint is applied to the sides, creating a slightly uneven "sunfire" effect. The top board is similarly painted: lighter in the middle and darker at the sides. After the paint has thoroughly dried, a spray acrylic finish is applied. This protects the instrument and makes it shine.

Chychul says that an electric paint sprayer would make the job quicker and apply the paint more evenly. Using a spray can requires careful attention in order to produce an even finish.

Ornamentation

Chychul appreciates that no special ornamental stickers were applied to tsymbaly in the Old Country. He believes that the instruments were varnished or stained at most. He has also left some of his tsymbaly plain, using Swedish oil, methane, or a similar product to bring out and preserve a natural colour.[6] In the past five years, however, Chychul more often expresses his own aesthetic taste by applying glittering decal material to the side blocks, front, and back of his instruments. In this case he selects a gold patterned decal, though he has used red and mother-of-pearl decals in the past.

Slightly oversized pieces of arborite are cut to cover the tops of the side blocks. Contact cement is brushed onto the arborite and side blocks. When the contact cement has set, the arborite is fitted and hammered down. Excess arborite is trimmed with the table saw and filed away. The "glittering" is measured out on a board and cut with a razor-edged knife. The self-stick "glittering" is placed on the arborite,

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[6]Such as the tsymbaly in figure 3, for example.

smoothed out, and trimmed with a file. This is then covered with masking tape to protect it from scratches during future work. The tape is also trimmed.

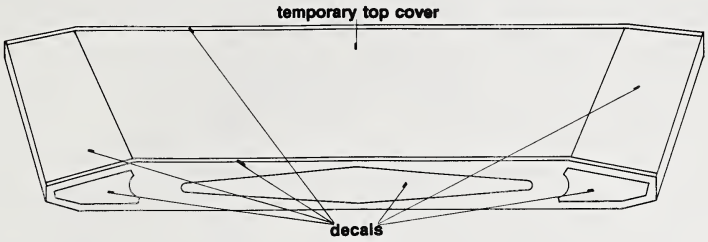

Figure 14. Decals applied to the tsymbaly.

Two long diamond patterns are traced on the decal and cut out. As the front of the tsymbaly is longer, the diamond pattern for it is made slightly longer than the back pattern. Each diamond pattern is centred on the front and back respectively. A specially shaped piece of decal, roughly triangular, is attached to each corner of the tsymbaly to cover the dowels and further ornament the instrument. Long 1/8 inch strips of decal are applied to the top edges of the front and back facings.

Pegs and Pins

Mr. Chychul has systematized his own procedure for plotting the positions and drilling holes for pins and tuning pegs on the side blocks.

Before establishing his new method, Chychul would mark out a complete grid pattern on the side blocks. First, a vertical line 1 inch from the front of the block was drawn. Next, parallel lines were drawn 7/16 inch from each other along the length of the blocks. In order to prevent overlapping strings, a point 3/8 inch was marked to the side of the vertical line at the bottom. An angled line was then drawn from the top of the vertical line to this point. Points for pegs were marked exactly 9/16 inch from each other on each horizontal line. The result was the required grid pattern of one hundred and twenty points; six rows of twenty points each.

Once the grid pattern was drawn, a centre punch prepared each hole for drilling. A small block of wood with a pre-drilled hole was used to hold a hand drill perpendicular to the top surface of the block as well as to ensure a proper and uniform depth of 1 1/4 inches.

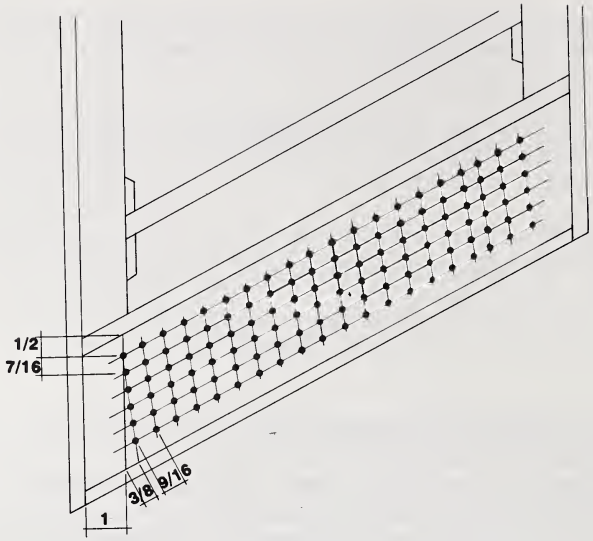

Figure 15. Grid pattern on the side block for drilling pegs.

Chychul's new method greatly streamlines the procedure. He has invented a form for drilling a full row at a time. To prepare the side block, the six points on each side are marked and drilled with a 3/16 inch bit. A special template, consisting of a 1/2 inch iron bar and a 3/4 inch maple board, is then positioned on one row and held in place with nails in the prepared holes. It now becomes unnecessary to measure out the grid pattern and Chychul can drill holes very quickly and uniformly. It takes approximately twelve minutes to drill the remaining holes.

Chychul emphasizes that, when drilling, one must quickly bring the drill in and out. Repeated drilling of the same hole would result in a larger hole that would not hold the peg. The very top of each hole is trimmed by lightly touching it with the drill bit.

To prepare the second side block for pins, an almost identical procedure is used. In this case, the grid pattern for the pins is arranged opposite the pegs, so that the closest peg will match the furthest pin in each group.[7]

The form for the pin side consists of a metal template with holes prepared an equal distance from each other. Holes are drilled to a consistent depth *"na oko"* (by eye) with a finishing nail to prepare for the pins. Hammering in the pins without pre-drilled holes might eventually result in a split block.

The pins themselves are made of 1 1/2 inch finishing nails with the heads cut off and the ends rounded on an electric grindstone. Chychul has used pieces of bicycle spokes for pins on other tsymbaly. The pins are hammered in one row at a time. Each row is checked with a piece of wood and leveled to an even height of approximately 5/16 inch above the surface of the side block.

[7]See the design, figure 5.

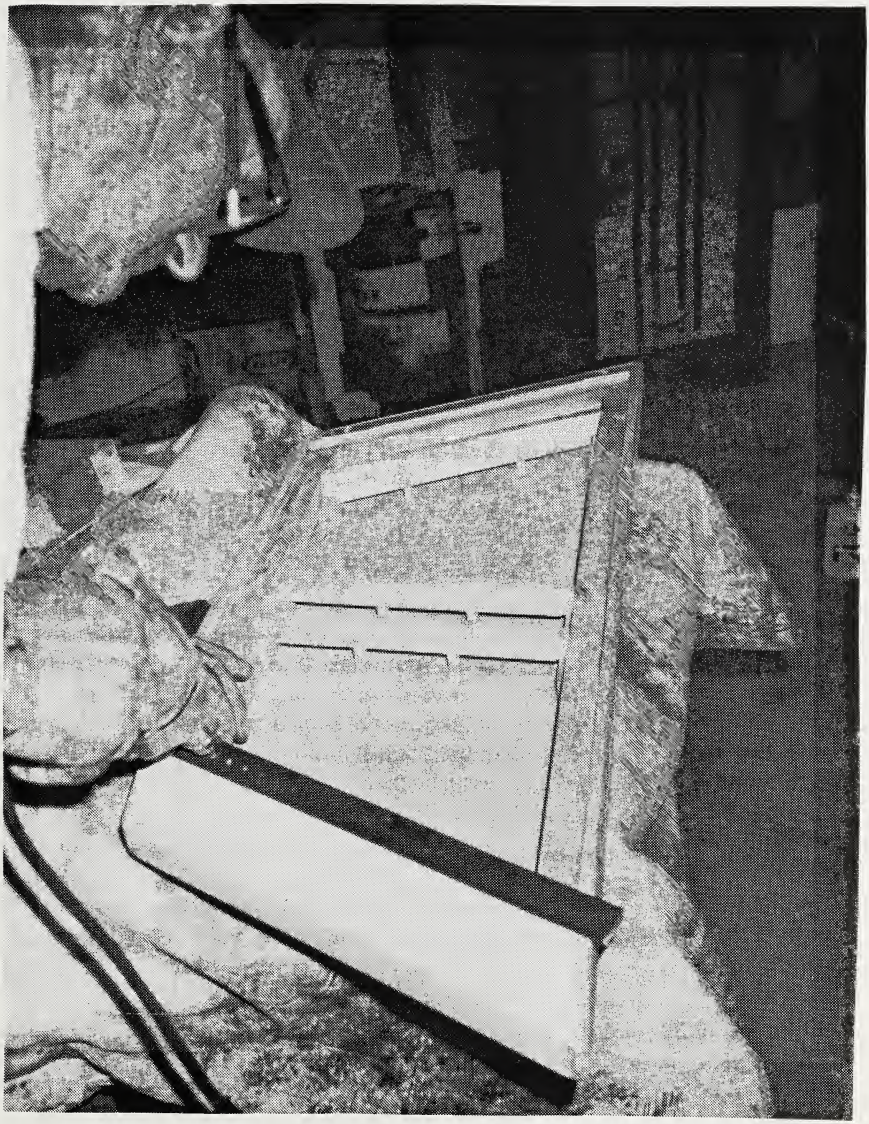

Figure 16. Tom Chychul drilling holes for pins into a side block. (Photograph by Mark Bandera)

Tuning pegs are bought in Willingdon, Alberta, and cost seventy two dollars for three hundred. They are inserted with a hand drill, as an electric drill could burn out the hole. Chychul is careful to leave a little bit of the *gvinty* (threads) showing, as stringing will turn them to their proper depth later. He inserts pegs in a diagonal pattern, skipping every other one. Eventually he backtracks to fill in the remaining holes.

Konyky (Top Bridges)

The term *konyk* also means "little horse" in Ukrainian. Chychul says that this term is used for the top bridges because the strings ride the *konyk*. Two top bridges are required; one near the centre of the instrument and one along its right side. If the maker is constructing tsymbaly for the first time, the pegs, pins, and strings must be set first. Each top bridge must then be measured to the courses of strings.

Chychul generally chooses maple for the top bridges, though oak and spruce may also be used. A piece of wood is cut 3/8 inch by 11/16 inch high and approximately 15 inches long. The ends will be trimmed later, but for now a longer piece of wood is easier to work with.

It is necessary to cut out eleven holes in each bridge, through which the courses of strings will later pass. The wood is marked along one side with a central horizontal line. For the centre top bridge, a series of eleven points are marked at 1 1/32 inch intervals along this line to identify the middle of each opening. Vertical lines are then drawn half way between each pair of centre points. Additional lines are inscribed 1/8 inch on each side of these vertical marks. Horizontal lines almost 1/4 inch above and below the central line identify the maximum height for the holes.

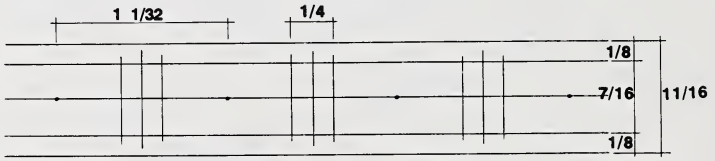

Figure 17. Markings for the openings in the centre top bridge. (Side view)

Each centre point is punched and drilled. Round files are used to carve out an elliptical opening approaching the size of the marked dimensions.

The end holes are not drilled. Instead, the ends are cut horizontally with the table saw. The top end is cut off with the hacksaw above the centre point for the last hole, while the bottom end is allowed to protrude an additional 1/4 inch. The ends are angled with the hacksaw and filed down. There are nine closed and two open holes on each bridge.

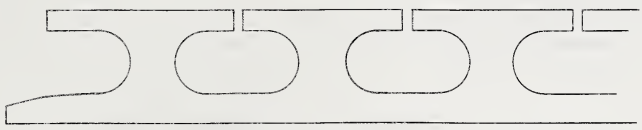

Figure 18. Openings in the end of the centre top bridge. (Side view)

Identical procedures are used for the side top bridge. Because the side bridge will sit on the tsymbaly at an angle of only 63° to the strings, its holes must be spaced 1 1/8 inches apart. Before Chychul finishes filing the elliptical holes, he files the ends down at an angle so the holes will most effectively accommodate the strings. The side bridge is more than an inch longer than the centre bridge.

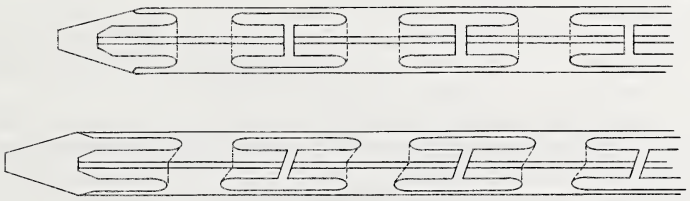

Figure 19. Finished top bridges showing their ends and the angle of the holes. (Top view)

A small central groove is cut along the top of each bridge with the table saw. Later, a bicycle spoke will be inserted into this groove, on which the strings will rest. The sides of the top bridge are shaved to a 9° angle from vertical with the table saw so the finished bridge will be almost triangular in cross-section. The piece is then sanded down.

Figure 20. Finished top bridge. (End view)

To make sure the bottom is flat, a flat file is put in a vise and the bridge is run over the file several times. Finally, the top of each hole is cut with the hacksaw. This is to allow the courses of strings to slip through during stringing. Should

repairs be needed, it also allows one to remove the top bridges at a later date without unstringing the whole instrument.

The top bridges are sometimes painted black or varnished, but are left their natural colour for this instrument.

Verkhnia doshka (Top Board) and Sound Holes

The top board is made from cedar siding. Because one piece of siding is not wide enough, two pieces are fitted together.

The pieces are first placed together, measured with a trapezoidal form to determine their necessary lengths, and cut at 63° angles. The pieces are allowed to remain wider than measured to allow for future fitting and trimming at the front and back of the frame.

Since the purchased siding is of graduating thickness, it is cut on the table saw to a thickness of just over 1/4 inch. As the blade rises to only 3 inches, the larger board cannot be cut through. The centre is shaved down with a hand planer. Both pieces are smoothed with electric and hand sanders.

The two pieces are fitted and glued together. While the glue dries, the pieces are immobilized on a specially made form. Excess glue is wiped away with a damp cloth. When dry, the top board is again sanded with both the electric and hand sanders. Eventually, a fine grade of sandpaper is used.

The top board is next fitted on the frame. Because symmetry is critical to the tuning, the board is turned over to make sure it fits equally well both ways. The top board is marked at the front and back of the frame and the excess is trimmed with the table saw. Front to back, the finished top board measures 12 inches.

Chychul has tried various patterns for the two sound holes he cuts into the top board. In the past he has copied their shapes from other builders. He has old copper templates for designs.[8] Now Chychul chooses to exercise his own sense of aesthetics, and makes his own design.

The centres of the sound holes are marked 6 inches from the back of the top board. The sound holes are 10 1/2 inches apart and equidistant from the centre top bridge. The left hole, then, is centred approximately 5 3/4 inches from the left edge of the board.

A coffee lid is screwed onto the centre of the sound hole and used as a compass to make two concentric circles 4 1/8 and 3 3/4 inches in diameter respectively. Six smaller arcs are then traced inside the design. They are 1 1/2 inches in diameter with

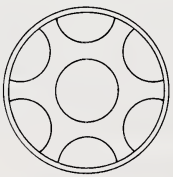

Figure 21. Sound hole in the top board.

[8]The templates were made by Peter Budniak.

their centres spaced around the circumference of the second circle. Holes are made with an electric drill in each of the arcs. Their shapes are roughly cut out with an electric sabre saw and finished with a half-moon saw. A final circle 1 1/2 inches in diameter is then cut out of the centre using a drill bit designed for fitting door knobs.

Front to back, the top board should fit tightly. However, it should have almost 1/8 inch leeway on each side. Without this space, the board would buckle after the instrument was strung, since the tension of the strings actually pulls the side blocks together.Two maple spacers approximately 1/2 inch wide are prepared for the sides of the top board. The bottom of each is flat while the top is convex. A small groove is cut along the top and a bicycle spoke is inserted. Each spacer rests next to the inner edge of the side blocks and runs the length of the top board. The bicycle spoke will serve as a contact point for the strings.

The top board is not glued or nailed to the instrument. String tension puts pressure on the spacers and top bridges to keep the board in place. Should repairs ever be needed, the strings can be loosened and the top board quickly removed by means of a hook-like device inserted into the sound holes. Before the top board is fitted for the final time, Chychul stamps his name and the date inside the frame on the bottom board under each sound hole.

Pal'tsiatky (Playing Sticks)

Playing sticks or hammers are made of maple, birch, or mahogany. Chychul sometimes varies the types of sticks somewhat, but chose to use a Zelisko pattern for the present instrument.[9]

Two pieces of maple are initially cut 3/8 inch wide, 1 1/2 inches high, and approximately 8 inches long.

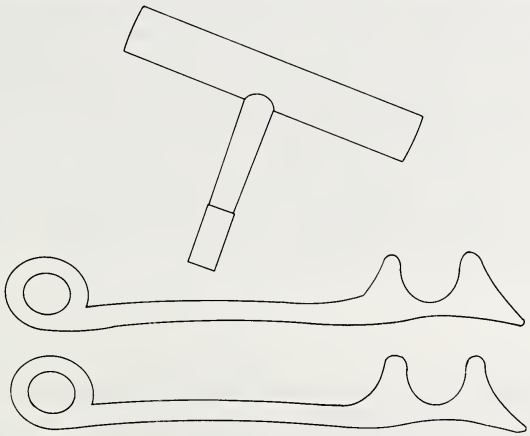

Figure 22. Playing sticks and tuning key.

[9]See "John Zelisko" and "Old versus New" below.

The pattern is traced on each piece using a prepared form. Holes are drilled at the appropriate place and filed into an elliptical shape 1/2 inch high and 7/16 inch long. The pattern is then roughly cut out with the sabre saw. The edges are rounded with files and increasingly fine sandpaper. The finished head measures 1/4 inch wide, while the handle is slightly thicker.

Strings

Different types of wire have been experimented with for use as strings. Mr. Chychul says that plain brass strings break too easily. While steel does not break, *"ne maie holos"* (it does not provide proper sound qualities). Bronze-brass is not bad, but Mr. Chychul feels that a bronze-phosphate alloy provides the optimum combination of sound and strength.

Chychul uses No. 8 wire for treble strings, although the top three courses are sometimes strung with No. 7 wire. The top six courses of bass strings are set with No. 8 wire, the next two courses are strung with No. 9 wire, and the last two courses consist of No. 9 or No. 10 wire.

The treble strings are strung first. To begin, one string of each note is loosely fitted. The centre top bridge is then slid underneath them. This bridge is called the treble bridge. The bridge is lined up so that 2/5 of each string (from contact point to contact point) is on its left side and 3/5 is on the right. This ratio will be critical in tuning the instrument. The rest of the treble strings are fitted in one course at a time from back to front.

When the treble strings are ready, the bass bridge is fitted to the right side. Each course of treble strings must be slid through its respective slot and into its opening in the side bridge.

When making and stringing strings, Chychul keeps the roll of wire in place at his feet so it does not unravel. The wire is pulled through the tuning peg, and a small loop is made by holding the wire with pliers and wrapping the end around counterclockwise seven or eight times. At the other end, the wire is cut approximately four to five inches past the tuning peg.

The tuning peg is then turned three or four times with a tuning key, until the threads are hidden and the string is tight. Care is taken to keep the string near the base of the tuning peg. Meanwhile, at the other end, the end of a screwdriver is used to hold the loop at the base of the pin. This process is repeated 120 times and takes approximately four hours from beginning to end.

Tuning

Tuning begins after the instrument is strung. Chychul uses the Gypsy tuning system[10] and tunes to other tsymbaly.

Once in a while, Chychul stops in order to verify the integrity of the instrument. He tries playing a tune in order to check the tone. The strings are scrutinized for good, even spacing. The instrument is checked to make sure that the string tension is not causing it to bend or buckle.

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[10]See "Tuning Systems" below.

It takes at least four tunings before the instrument begins to hold its tune. Chychul says sound improves with time and the instrument never sounds good the first day. It takes at least three weeks for the sound to mature.

Kliuch (Tuning Key)

A 7/16 inch by 4 inch bolt is put in a vise. Its head is cut off with a hacksaw and the centre is marked with a punch. A 13/64 inch hole is drilled about 1 inch deep into the end of the bolt using an electric hand drill. A small amount of oil primes the hole to keep it from smoking during drilling.

Chychul keeps a flat file on hand whose end has been ground to the square size of a tuning peg. This is forced into the hole with a heavy hammer. The sides of the bolt are also beaten to make the hole square. Old pegs are used to check the fit.

The bolt is then inserted into an electric hand drill as if it were a drill bit. The drill is secured in a vise. With the drill turned on, various grades of files and sandpaper are applied to the bolt to make patterns and a smooth shiny surface.

After being prepared with a centre punch, a 3/16 hole is drilled near the other end of the bolt. This hole will be used to secure the bolt onto a handle.

The handle consists of a 1/2 inch copper pipe. A piece of wood is filed to fit inside and hammered into the pipe on an anvil. The wood and pipe are cut to a length of 3 3/4 inches with the hacksaw. This copper pipe is polished with sandpaper. On occasion, Chychul has used heavier steel pipe and has found that no wood is needed.

The centre of the handle is marked with the punch and the drill press is used to make a 7/16 inch hole. The centre punch is also used to mark the wood at both ends. A hole is drilled through the centre of the wood lengthwise.

A grindstone is used to curve the top of the bolt. The handle is fitted in a vise and the bolt pushed inside. The head of a nail is cut off, and the nail is hammered through the handle and bolt hole in order to hold the two pieces tightly together. The ends of the handle are filed and the corners are ground down. The result is a "T"-shaped tuning key of Mr. Chychul's own design.

Mr. Chychul later builds a padded wooden case for the instrument.

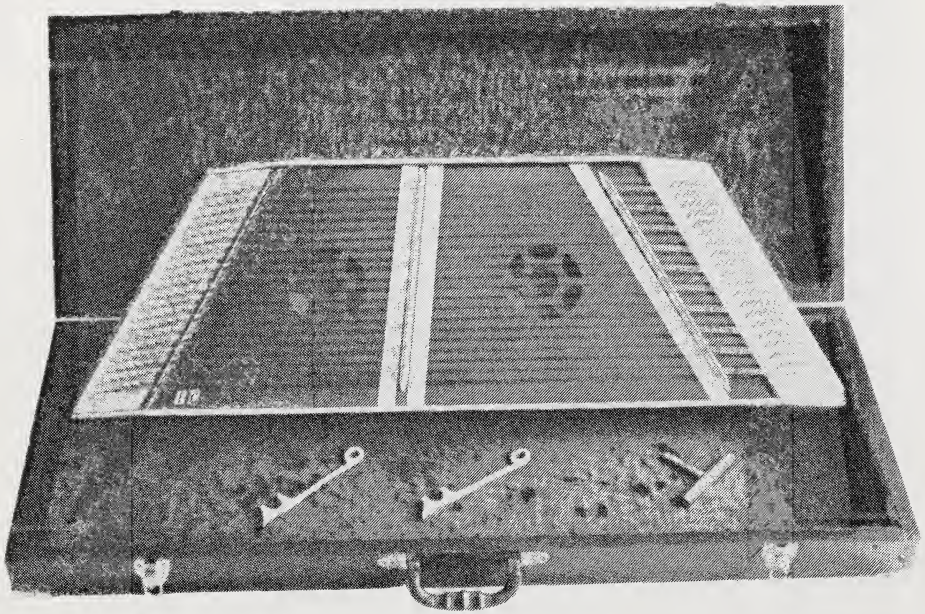

Figure 23. Finished Chychul tsymbaly. (Photograph by Mark Bandera)

TSYMBALY MAKING IN EAST CENTRAL ALBERTA

More than twenty living tsymbaly makers have been identified in east central Alberta.[1] The present-day craft has strong links with the earlier tradition in east central Alberta and also with the Old Country before that.

With continuity has also come change. Both are evident when observing tsymbaly in the area. Some differences between modern and old-time tsymbaly reflect technological change. Other differences reflect changes in community and musical roles. It is significant to note that there is much variation and individual expression within the loose-knit community of tsymbaly makers.

"It All Started in Andrew"

As one tsymbaly craftsman states, "It all started in Andrew."[2] He was referring to John Zelisko, who shaped much of the tsymbaly tradition in east central Alberta. Zelisko was born in Ukraine in 1884 and moved to Canada at the beginning of the twentieth century. He worked in construction and lived in Andrew until his death in 1965.[3]

Zelisko is primarily remembered as a musician and a maker of violins and tsymbaly. He was known as the first Ukrainian musician in the area. He led his own band, the "John Zelisko Orchestra." Though he also made violins, Zelisko is best remembered by other tsymbaly craftsmen for his tsymbaly making. There is even some lore among makers that Zelisko did nothing but produce tsymbaly.[4]

"Old man" Zelisko set the standard for tsymbaly making in east central Alberta.[5] There is status attached to playing Zelisko tsymbaly.[6] Many present-day tsymbaly craftsmen took measurements for their own instrument designs from Zelisko tsymbaly, and some have made a point of acquiring one.[7]

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[1]See Appendix II.

[2]Taped interview with John Kinasewich, Edmonton, July 1984.

[3]*Dreams and Destinies: Andrew and District* (Andrew: Andrew Historical Society, 1980), pp. 633-4; Taped interview with Mike Ewanchuk, brother-in-law of John Zelisko, Edmonton, April 1984.

[4]Taped interview with Bill Ropchan, Edmonton, March 1984.

[5]The "old man" characterization is respectfully used by tsymbaly makers John Babichuk, George Strynadka, and Mike Ewanchuk.

[5]The "old man" characterization is respectfully used by tsymbaly makers John Babichuk, George Strynadka, and Mike Ewanchuk.

[6]Tom Chychul's brother played on Zelisko tsymbaly with the "Northern Troubadours."

[7]Tom Chychul, Metro Lastiwka, and Nick Supervich, and others own or have taken measurements from Zelisko tsymbaly.

Though many of Zelisko's tsymbaly produced exceptional tone,[8] it is also reported that some of his instruments were not so good. Many makers today view their own tsymbaly as improvements on the early instruments.

Old versus New

Quite a bit of lore exists about early tsymbaly in east central Alberta and the Old Country. Early tsymbaly display some characteristics that are uncommon today. One such instrument was bought forty-three years ago in Smoky Lake by Tom Chychul. The front board measures 27 inches and the back board measures 40 inches long. It is 14 3/4 inches wide and 2 1/4 inches deep. The strings are iron, the tuning pegs are threadless and made by a blacksmith. The bottom board is nailed in place. As Chychul says, it "don't sound as good, but don't break." This instrument has twenty-two courses of strings, but was not tuned in the *tsyhans'kyi strii* (Gypsy style) common today.[9]

Today there is a concensus that smaller tsymbaly are better. Many craftsmen have stated that the larger Old Country tsymbaly were unwieldly.[10] Mike Oleksiuk, aged eighty-one, makes tsymbaly representative of the old type; the way his father taught him.[11]

Tsymbaly craftsmen of east central Alberta identify two basic types of tsymbaly brought to Canada.[12] The first type of tsymbaly is variously called *halyts'ki* (Galician) or *ukrains'ki* (Ukrainian). The second type of tsymbaly is called *tsyhans'ki* (Gypsy), *bukovyns'ki* (Bukovynian), *hutsul's'ki* (Hutsul), or *rumuns'ki* (Romanian). The first type, Galician, is said to have had four or five strings per course and often only sixteen or eighteen courses of strings. The second type, Gypsy, had six strings per course and twenty or twenty-two courses of strings. Gypsy tsymbaly have become the standard type today.

Several distinctive features of tsymbaly which were common both in the Old Country and in east central Alberta have been disappearing in recent times. One old-time feature is a small hole cut into the right hand corner of the top board. There are several ideas as to the purpose of this hole. In Smoky Lake, three tsymbaly builders came up with three different theories.[13] One said it was for holding the sticks, the second said for holding the tuning key, and the third for putting money in and

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[8]Bill Ropchan remembers a set of tsymbaly made by Zelisko in the 1950s that he wanted very badly.

[9]See "Tuning Systems" below.

[10]John Babichuk and Tom Chychul say Old Country tsymbaly were normally larger, though Nick Mischi remembers both larger and smaller tsymbaly in the Old Country.

[11]Taped interview with Mike Oleksiuk, Smoky Lake, May 1984; personal interview with Mike Oleksiuk, Smoky Lake, June 1984; *Our Legacy: History of Smoky Lake and Area* (Smoky Lake: Smoky Lake and District Cultural and Heritage Society, 1983), pp. 663-4.

[12]Taped interview with John Babichuk, Smoky Lake, May 1984.

[13]Taped interviews with John Babichuk, Mike Oleksiuk, and personal interview with Metro Lastiwka, Smoky Lake, May 1984.

shaking it out.[14] Mr. Pete Holowaty still includes the small hole in the tsymbaly he makes, as well as two long holes in the back board.[15]

The *muzyky* tradition often involved playing while standing.[16] A leather strap was placed around the player's neck and attached to the side blocks in order to free the player's legs for movement. This playing posture and the shoulder strap have virtually disappeared as players rest the tsymbaly on their knees, on tables, or on special stands.

It is standard today to cut two sound holes into the sound board. In the Old Country, tsymbaly variously had two sound holes, four sound holes,[17] or a series of small sound holes along the edges of the side blocks.[18] This depended on the building tradition of the area and the tsymbaly maker himself.

Mykola Lysenko writes that tsymbaly strings were made of copper or iron wire.[19] Tom Chychul believes that when the first immigration to Canada occurred, iron wire was standard. Nick Mischi remembers that bronze was also available in the Old Country.

There are two basic types of playing sticks. One kind consists of a circular opening for the forefinger, a small head at the end, and a relatively straight body.[20] The second type consists of an opened grip for the forefinger, a small head with a hole, and a curved body. The Zelisko design conforms to this second type and is most popular today. Nick Mischi confirms that both types were used in the Old Country.

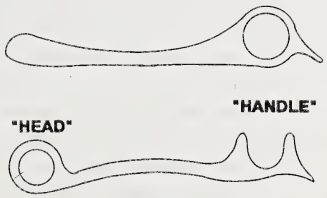

Figure 24. Two types of playing sticks used in east central Alberta.

When asked about the purpose of the holes at the heads of the sticks, Chychul said, *"aby faini buly"* (so they'll be nice). Mr. Chychul makes the holes because they are traditional and ornamental, rather than for any explicit utilitarian reason. It is interesting to note that both styles of sticks feature closed holes carved into them, though at opposite ends. One possible function is that of easy storage. In Mr. Metro Lastiwka's workshop in Smoky Lake, for example, the sticks are hung by the holes on nails.

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[14]Mierczynski, *Muzyka Huculszczyzny*, p. 154, provides a diagram and says the hole is for holding the tuning key; while Toelken, *Dynamics of Folklore*, p. 111, states the hole is to allow the player to shake money out.

[15]See figure 2 for this feature.

[16]See figure 2.

[17]Mierczynski, *Muzyka Huculszczyzny*, pp. 150-5.

[18]Nick Mischi says his uncle built tsymbaly with sound holes by the side blocks at the beginning of the twentieth century.

[19]Lysenko, *Narodni muzychni instrumenty na Ukraini*, p. 51.

[20]Chabyniak, *Muzychni instrumenty*, p. 46, shows a photograph of such playing sticks.

Nick Mischi, though primarily a player, makes sticks for himself the way his uncle did in Bukovyna. They belong to the type with closed finger holes. He covers the head with thin *sap'ian* (soft leather).[21]

The sound of the tsymbaly can be greatly affected by the sticks used: the harder the wood, the more brilliant the sound. When the string is struck with a hard stick, it is dampened for a shorter period. Conversely, covering a stick with leather or other material mellows the sound.[22]

The Tsymbaly Craft Today

Though today's makers are still essentially carrying forward the traditions of previous makers in the area, they may also feel free to depart somewhat from traditional design and express their own modern sense of aesthetics and invention.

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of tsymbaly construction today is the availability of modern tools, materials, and technology. This is evident in Tom Chychul's production of tsymbaly and is characteristic of all the tsymbaly makers interviewed for this study.

The outward appearance of tsymbaly is often defined by one of two aesthetic philosophies. Traditionalists believe that there is nothing so beautiful as the natural wood. These makers use only stains, varnishes, oils, or similar finishes.

Other makers decorate the surfaces of their instruments with plastics, glittering decals, mother-of-pearl designs, and acetate. Much of the lure of these designs lies in the reflective effects of the tsymbaly on stage under the lights. Though diametrically opposed to each other, both of these aesthetic approaches have managed to find a following and carve out a niche in the contemporary tsymbaly market.

Tsymbaly makers often stress their own strong points when evaluating tsymbaly. Nick Supervich, for example, is a master carpenter. His tsymbaly feature moulded and curved backs, sunburst finishes, and inlaid electronic pickups. He does not, however, play the instrument himself. A tsymbaly maker who is also a player may lack the carpentry skills of Nick Supervich, but may tend to stress the musical characteristics of his own instruments.

In an effort to improve their tsymbaly, some makers have researched instrument building. Generally, tsymbaly makers have been disappointed by literature concerning hammered dulcimers.[23] They have, however, taken cues from other musical instrument crafts and traditions.

Mike Ewanchuk builds violins at home and has a collection of works about violins. He takes principles learned from violin making and applies them to making tsymbaly. For example, he is very careful of what he uses to treat the wood and never uses paint or decals.[24]

Great care may be taken in choosing materials. Paul Ewasiuk prefers rosewood imported from South Africa. The wood is cured for several years, and it may take

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[21]Lysenko, *Narodni muzychni instrumenty na Ukraini*, p. 152, describes sticks covered with *sap'ian*.

[22]Donington, *Music and Its Instruments*, p. 96.

[23]See "Related Musical Traditions" above.

[24]Taped interview with Mike Ewanchuk, Edmonton, April 1984.

several months for him to build one instrument. He feels that several weeks are needed between certain steps in order to ensure that the glue sets properly.[25]

Craftsmen such as Tom Chychul use woods that are locally available. They make sure the woods are suitably dry, free of knots, and properly cut. Such makers try to economize, producing a functional, well-constructed product with a minimum of time and money. When making the bottom board, Chychul cuts the plywood in a way that produces the most usable pieces per sheet.[26]

The playing sticks reflect many of the makers' modern ideas. Nick Supervich colour codes the sticks he makes in order to differentiate between right and left. He claims that they fit differently as they wear. Pete Holowaty adds a small piece of teak to the head of his sticks to make them last longer. This also increases the brilliance of the tone when playing. Mike Ewanchuk covers the tips of some sticks with felt to produce a mellower tone. For similar effect Paul Ewasiuk covers the tips with rubber.

Modernization and innovation go hand in hand in the tsymbaly craft. One of the reasons given for preference of curved sticks is the smaller size of tsymbaly today. With the courses of strings closer together, it is thought that curved sticks reduce the chances of striking unwanted tones.

Many of today's craftsmen make table-like stands for their tsymbaly. Fewer players hold the instrument on their knees when playing while seated, as is traditional.[27] Mr. Ewasiuk angles his stand toward himself in order to make the strings more visible. He also angles the tips of his playing sticks specially to complement the angle of his instrument while playing.

One of the newest adaptations of tsymbaly is amplification.[28] In order to better compete with other musical instruments, tsymbaly makers and players have been experimenting with increasingly sophisticated technology. As microphones have proven inadequate, a trend toward electronic pickups has grown. These pickups were initially attached to the outside of the instrument with clips or putty, but now some builders inlay pickups inside the instrument as a standard feature. One simply plugs the tsymbaly directly into an amplifier.

The extent of this interest in electronic gadgetry is attested to by the new electronic tsymbaly being developed by Joe Tkachyk.[29] They consist of a solid block of wood 1 1/2 inches high and feature eight electronic pickups each.

Tuning Systems

Though basically chromatic, tsymbaly tunings do not follow a continuous sequence. This allows for more efficiency in playing. Notes commonly played consecutively in chord patterns are placed closer together in order to minimize motion while playing. Each course of strings, divided by the centre top bridge, produces

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[25]Taped interview with Paul Ewasiuk, Lamont, July 1984. A picture of his tsymbaly appears in Zonia Keywan, "A Labor of Love," *The Western Producer*, 22 July 1976, p. C4.

[26]See "Bottom Board" above.

[27]Lysenko, *Narodni muzychni instrumenty na Ukraini*, p. 52.

[28]In a telephone interview with Bill Wolansky, summer, 1984, it was suggested that amplification also contributes to the trend toward smaller tsymbaly.

[29]Personal interview with Joe Tkachyk, Edmonton, July 1984.

two notes at an interval of a fifth. For exact tuning, the length of strings on each side of the top bridge must correspond exactly to a 3:2 ratio.[30]

There are two basic types of tuning systems. One is usually called *halyts'kyi* (Galician) or *ukrains'kyi* (Ukrainian).[31] The second, more common tuning, is variously called *tsyhans'kyi* (Gypsy), *bukovyns'kyi* (Bukovynian), *rumuns'kyi* (Romanian), or *volos'kyi* (Wallachian).[32]

The Galician tuning lacks a B-flat string, as the Galician tsymbaly are traditionally smaller, with fewer courses of strings. This tuning allows for a range equal to Bukovynian tsymbaly, though with less capability for modulating keys. This system is rarely used today.

Most makers and players do not differentiate between Gypsy/Bukovynian and Romanian/Wallachian tsymbaly. Mischi says that both tunings follow the same pattern, but that the Romanian tuning traditionally begins with a high A string. This suggests a larger instrument with more courses of strings.

Mischi uses a variation of the Gypsy tuning in order to further extend the capabilities of his tsymbaly. Some notes overlap in the Gypsy tuning, so Mischi adds an additional small bridge for courses one, three, and five on the right side. Also, the bottom segment of the centre top bridge is cut away and shifted slightly to the side in order to provide an extra bass note, which Mischi finds useful while playing.

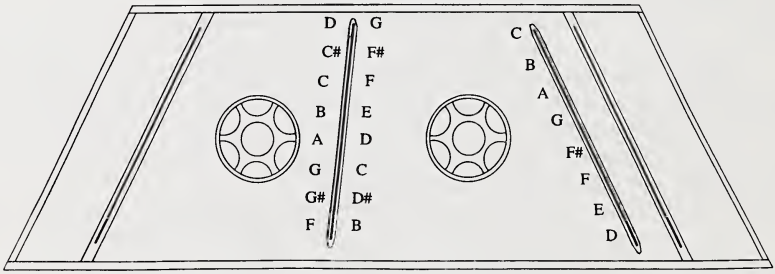

Figure 25. Galician tuning system. The system has twenty notes.

[30]Lysenko, *Narodni Muzychni instrumenty na Ukraini*, pp. 54-5.

[31]Mierczynski, *Muzyka Huculszczyzny*, p. 153, provides a close equivalent to this tuning.

[32]Slight variations in tunings exist. For example, the C and C-sharp strings in courses two and four of the Gypsy tuning are sometimes reversed.

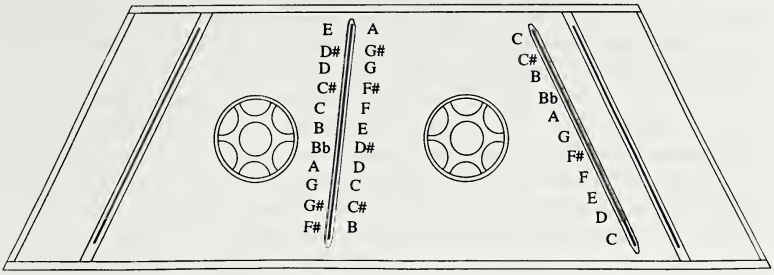

Figure 26. Gypsy tuning system. The system has twenty-six notes.

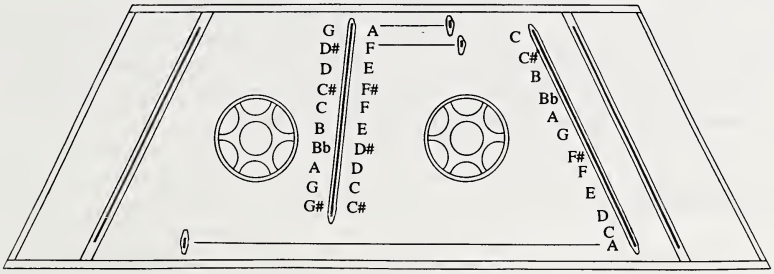

Figure 27. Mischi tuning system. The system has thirty notes.

Community

The tsymbaly makers form their own special community. They behave socially in well-defined ways. Their behaviour reflects their own self-images and the expectations of the society as a whole.[33]

As Tom Chychul notes, making tsymbaly is a male function in the community. *"Divchata ne budiut, ale hraiut"* (Females don't make them, they only play them).

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[33]Allan P. Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 123.

None of the tsymbaly craftsmen or players interviewed has ever heard of a woman making tsymbaly.

Esoteric rules exist among tsymbaly makers.[34] In order to remain on friendly terms, they have developed specific rules of ethics and etiquette for their community. It is considered impolite to belittle competitors, and it is considered improper to brag about one's own "superior" work.[35]

In order to advertise himself, the maker most often repeats word of mouth endorsements. It is considered far more effective for the maker to repeat other craftsmen's, players', or buyers' endorsements of his product rather than to speak for himself. This has the effect of adding legitimacy to the statement and making it sound more objective. It also minimizes potential resentment from other craftsmen, who might otherwise contest a questionable claim.

Many makers claim they are self-taught,[36] though it is common for makers to start by measuring other tsymbaly. By socializing with other builders, they can also implicitly absorb their knowledge. The socializing process often involves a type of barter: trading the odd process or secret for information. Most makers are willing to share some information, though a few secrets are usually never told.[37] George Strynadka was taught how to make tsymbaly by John Zelisko, who wanted the art continued. John Babichuk, aged seventy-four, sold an instrument to a seven year old player two years ago and has promised to teach the boy how to make tsymbaly.[38] Thus, the tradition continues.

A few members of this community disregard the rules of etiquette previously described. They keep to themselves and refuse to socialize with other craftsmen or divulge any "secrets." This leads to resentment from other makers. The praise Tom Chychul has for craftsmen such as Nick Supervich contrasts with his negative comments when discussing unfriendly colleagues.

Marketing

The greatest proof of the quality of a person's tsymbaly is the fact that they get sold. As Chychul says: *"Iak by ne buly dobri, khlop by ne kupyv"* (If they hadn't been good, the fellow wouldn't have bought them). Often a maker such as Bill Ropchan includes anecdotes of previous sales in his sales pitch to prospective buyers.

> I sold a couple to Lamont, couple of dolsemars.[39] One dolsemar, I was playing, friend come, and he take me to (how you call) high-rise he was living. And I went there and I have my tsymbaly and my violin, and we

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[34]William Hugh Jansen, "The Esoteric-Exoteric Factor in Folklore," in *The Study of Folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1965), pp. 43-51.

[35]When pressed, Mike Ewanchuk explicitly stated that he cannot talk about his own work or that of other specific builders.

[36]Bill Ropchan and Pete Holowaty, for example.

[37]For example, Chychul regularly exchanges information with Supervich, but has not yet shown him his drilling system. See "Pegs and Pins" above.

[38]The boy, Shawn Gibson of Sherwood Park, was a participant in the 1984 CFCW Tsymbaly Competition.

[39]"Dolsemar" is Ropchan's spelling. He stresses the final syllable.

> play. There's a man come from Saskatchewan, and he play violin and the dolsemar. And we play that night and after [. . .] (He's going home and I'm going home and I put dolsemar in box I going to take it home.) He says, "What you doin'?" "Well, going home." "You not going take that dolsemar." I say, "Why not?" (Ah, no, I won't sell it that dolsemar. But what the hell, that time was cheap. Oh, I don't know, I don't remember, 1942, 1943. And that was a very good dolsemar.) And he says, "No, you're not going to take!" Okay, how much you gi' me?" "How much you want?" I says, " I want three hundred fifty dollars, you want it - take it that tsymbaly, or not - you won't get." He didn't say nothing (That his son-in-law). He just pull the money and pay the money and I just pull the money. What the hell! In two weeks I have another one like that. I was building pretty fast.[40]

This "take it or leave it" attitude has served Bill Ropchan well in his marketing.

Kinasewich says that, "Dan Chomlak used to tell listeners that if they want to buy tsymbaly, they should go to John Kinasewich." This statement is meant to prove that he is a master craftsman. It is also significant because it shows how a participant in a different medium helps popularize and support the tsymbaly maker and his craft.

Some makers feel it beneath their status as "master" craftsmen to actively promote their products. These makers rely entirely on word-of-mouth advertising and expect buyers to come to them. In addition, such craftsmen may offer little variety in their product. Supervich makes one model of tsymbaly which he considers his best, and the potential buyer can take it or leave it.

Other makers are more accommodating. They also rely heavily on word-of-mouth advertising, but are more likely to actively pursue potential buyers. Tom Chychul is a prime example of this second type. As long as it does not compromise his sense of expertise as a craftsman, he is willing to adjust price and design specifications for customers.

When Bill Ropchan made his first tsymbaly in 1917, tsymbaly typically cost $20 or less. Prices currently range from $350 to $1,800 for a new instrument. Chychul sold a miniature instrument at Vegreville in July 1984 for $350. Paul Ewasiuk charges about $1,800. Refurbished tsymbaly can sometimes be found for less.

Prices often reflect the time invested, options such as pickups, and special materials used, such as rosewood. However, this is not always the case. Another general rule of thumb seems to be that tsymbaly makers who live in the city charge more than those who live in the country. Quality and price may also vary from tsymbaly to tsymbaly and from maker to maker. Some tsymbaly are more brilliant sounding, others more mellow. Musical tastes vary among both craftsmen and buyers.

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[40]Taped interview with Bill Ropchan, Edmonton, March 1984.

CONCLUSION

This study seeks to characterize tsymbaly making in east central Alberta. It is found that few scholarly works deal effectively with the tsymbaly tradition in western Canada. Processes of continuity and change described in studies of Ukrainian Canadian culture (most notably by Robert Klymasz) provide models for analyzing the tsymbaly making tradition, while works describing Old Country tsymbaly provide the closest comparison with the tsymbaly made in east central Alberta today.

For data, this investigation depends on tsymbaly makers and other active participants in the community today. Tsymbaly afficionados (audience and players) are easily found at festivals and competitions. Some of the players and audience members are able to identify a few tsymbaly makers. Most of the tsymbaly makers know other tsymbaly craftsmen, and the circle of contacts continues to expand for the interested researcher.

It is clear that tsymbaly players, listeners, and makers do not represent mutually exclusive groups, but are dependent on each other. Listeners and players provide a market for the tsymbaly craftsman's product. The community serves both as a pool of resources and as a critical audience for each of its members. The individual expression of each craftsman keeps the art from becoming static.

Even today, the tsymbaly phenomenon reflects vital links with the past. Newer tsymbaly mediums such as festivals, radio, and recordings are extensions of historically popular events featuring tsymbaly, most notably the wedding. The mediums themselves help popularize each other and tsymbaly in the process.

The old *muzyky* tradition (featuring violin) with which tsymbaly were once associated has evolved into the new Ukrainian country and western musical tradition. In the process, the role of tsymbaly has changed from a secondary to a lead instrument. Tsymbaly players thus enjoy increased status in the musical tradition and the tsymbaly have become an invigorating symbol of cultural identity. Though musical styles have changed and some musical customs are lost, the spirit and vitality of tsymbaly music attest to a lively musical tradition. Much of the endurance of tsymbaly can be attributed to the accommodative nature of their tradition. This is true in relation to performance style, the community, and to tsymbaly construction.

Techniques of early tsymbaly makers such as John Zelisko still live in the memory of the community. Early traditions and lore are kept active through imitation and oral exchanges. Traditional elements in the craft today include the basic trapezoidal shape, the groupings of the strings, tuning, and other features. More traditionally oriented makers tend to follow the designs of the past closely.

On the other hand, new ideas arise as the contexts change and as individual makers seek to experiment, exercise individual taste, or reflect their various levels of skill. Chychul's tsymbaly incorporate his innovations in drilling holes for pegs and pins, in the design of the sound holes, in the ornamentation, and in other respects. Some of these innovations become disseminated through interaction among members

of the community and themselves become incorporated into the tradition to a greater or lesser degree. Reflective decals, amplification, and instrument stands have become quite widespread as they help the tsymbaly function most effectively on stage.

Some of the changes taking place in east central Alberta have led to a certain degree of standardization. Increasingly, the size of the tsymbaly, the type of tuning, and the style of sticks reflect a tendency towards uniformity. For each of these features, one of the traditional variants has become dominant and tends to eliminate the others.

However, other aspects of tsymbaly construction display as much or even more variety today than in the days of John Zelisko. Craftsmen have access to broader ranges of technology and materials. They are often keen to experiment and are rewarded in some ways for individuality and innovation. Technicians often emphasize the fine finishing on their instruments. Musicians often stress the acoustic qualities of their creations. Traditionalists try to follow the early designs most closely, whereas modernists take pride in the novelty of their instruments.

Tom Chychul's taste may be characterized as reflecting a balance between tradition and modernity in terms of sound, aesthetics, design, and production techniques. His tsymbaly clearly reflect the processes of continuity and change inherent in tsymbaly making today. By following the section on construction, one can learn to make a set of tsymbaly. As Bill Ropchan and others have stressed, however, it takes practice and talent or help from an expert to be successful. Tradition, socialization, and the maker's ability to interpret and market his product are also vital aspects of the art.

The present study is intended to show a dynamically active tradition of tsymbaly making in east central Alberta. All the requisites for continuing success of the tradition exist today. The degree to which tsymbaly making remains a productive folk art in the future will depend on a continuing audience generated by popular tsymbaly mediums, the retention of tsymbaly as a visual and acoustic cultural marker, and an active community of makers continuing to exchange traditional and novel ideas.

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Wolansky, Bill. Telephone Interview. Summer, 1984.

APPENDIX I
GLOSSARY

The following is a partial list of common terms used by informants and in this study when discussing tsymbaly:

bunt, bunty course, courses (groups of strings). Modern tsymbaly often have courses of six strings each, tuned to the same note.

diry holes
vertity diry to drill holes

doshka board
perednia front
spidnia bottom
zadnia back
verkhnia top

fostyk [khvostyk] small tail on *pal'tsiatky*

gvinty threads on tuning pegs

hembliuvaty to plane
hembliuvaty doshku to plane a board

holos sound, voice
maie holos it has good tone

karuk carpenter's glue, horse glue
karuchyty to glue

kliuch tuning key

konyk top bridge, small horse

kovban, kovbany side block, blocks

muzyky traditional grouping of musical instruments, usually consisting of violin, tsymbaly, drum

na oko without measuring, by eye

pal'tsiatky sticks, beaters, hammers

pidpory support bridges

pidstavky sound posts

pyny a word used by Chychul in reference to pins and tuning pegs

sap'ian soft leather, moroccan leather, sometimes used to cover *pal'tsiatky*

skrypka violin, common in Ukrainian traditional and country and western music

stroity to tune

struny strings

strii tuning system
- **halyts'kyi** Galician
- **hutsul's'kyi** Hutsul
- **rumuns'kyi** Romanian
- **tsyhans'kyi** Gypsy
- **ukrains'kyi** Ukrainian
- **volos'kyi** Wallachian

tsymbal 1) blockhead, simpleton 2) a word used by Chychul and Babichuk as a singular for tsymbaly

tsymbaly Ukrainian hammered dulcimer
- **halyts'ki** Galician
- **hutsul's'ki** Hutsul
- **rumuns'ki** Romanian
- **tsyhans'ki** Gypsy
- **ukrains'ki** Ukrainian

zamok, zamky lock, locks (joint)

APPENDIX II
LIST OF TSYMBALY MAKERS

This is a list of tsymbaly makers living in east central Alberta as of 1984.

Babichuk, John. Seventy-four years old. Smoky Lake. Made forty-one tsymbaly and rebuilt four more. Copied Zelisko pattern.

Brayer, Eric. Forty-six years old. Edmonton. Made three tsymbaly. Learned from father-in-law, Bill Wolansky.

Chychul, Tom. Sixty-three years old. Tofield. Made seventy-five tsymbaly. Learned from Harry Pidladsky, Chipman.

Ewanchuk, Mike. Sixty-nine years old. Edmonton. Made fourteen tsymbaly. Brother-in-law of John Zelisko, Andrew.

Ewasiuk, Anton. Sixty-eight years old. Lamont. Made six tsymbaly. Brother of Paul Ewasiuk.

Ewasiuk, Paul. Seventy-two years old. Lamont. Made twenty-seven tsymbaly. Learned from John Kinasewych.

Gargus, Walter. Age unknown. Andrew. Made three tsymbaly.

Holowaty, Pete. Seventy-three years old. Edmonton. Made ten tsymbaly. Uncle of popular player Steven Chwok.

Kinasewich, John. Sixty-five years old. Edmonton. Made over one hundred tsymbaly. Learned from a Mr. Holowaychuk.

Knysh, John. Sixty-nine years old. Smoky Lake. Made nine tsymbaly.

Kolody, Bill. Eighty years old. Two Hills. Made seven tsymbaly. First tsymbaly made fifty years ago.

Lacusta, Metro. Sixty years old. Vegreville. Made thirty-four tsymbaly.

Lastiwka, Metro. Sixty-eight years old. Smoky Lake. Made seven tsymbaly. Plays with Radomsky Orchestra.

Mandrusiak, Nick. Sixty years old. From Two Hills, now in Lavoy. Made ten tsymbaly.

Najdziak, Mike. Seventy-nine years old. Vegreville. Made eight tsymbaly.

Oleksiuk, Mike. Eighty-one years old. Smoky Lake. Made fifteen tsymbaly. Learned from his father.

Ropchan, Bill. Eighty-three years old. From Bellis and Lamont, now in Edmonton. Made thirty-eight tsymbaly. First set made in 1917.

Skraba, Bill. Seventy-one years old. Andrew. Made six tsymbaly.

Strynadka, George. Sixty-three years old. From Willingdon, now in Vegreville. Made twelve tsymbaly. Father made tsymbaly sixty years ago. Learned directly from John Zelisko.

Supervich, Nick. Sixty years old. From Willingdon, now in Edmonton. Made forty tsymbaly. Learned from John Kinasewych. Has Zelisko tsymbaly.

Tkachyk, Joe. Sixty-seven years old. Made two electric tsymbaly with Michael Tkachyk.

Tkachyk, Michael. Twenty-seven years old. Made two electric tsymbaly with Joe Tkachyk.

Wolansky, Bill. Sixty-nine years old. From Edwand, now in Edmonton. Made seven tsymbaly.