

# FOLK INSTRUMENTS OF UKRAINE



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Interest in traditional folk instruments is growing, not only in Ukraine but also in the West. This movement, which started almost a hundred years ago as an offshoot of romanticism, has been a valuable tool in defining national identity and in developing a better understanding of the cultural attributes of each nation. A similar movement can be observed in the new-found popularity in Renaissance and Baroque music in the West. Not only are recordings and music readily available, but the quality of these works has become more sophisticated. The audience is no longer able to accept straight performances of ancient music, but requires that authentic instruments be used and that the music be performed in an authentic style, even though such perfect performances would have been a rarity at the time the music was conceived.

This trend will most probably influence those who enjoy listening to and playing Ukrainian music. They will become more interested in the finer points of the music, such as the use of correct instruments and their differences.

This booklet is an introduction to the folk instruments of the Ukrainian people. It will allow you to gain a better understanding of the instruments of this region and to appreciate what you are listening to. It is written in a popular style so as to be accessible to all and to enable its use for school projects and as a handy reference book, without the use of too many technical terms which may cloud some of the more interesting facts about an instrument.

Much has been written and published about Ukrainian folk instruments. Some of this has been incorrect or outdated and yet has been repeated quite often. The author has made a great effort to ensure that all the facts in this book are current and correct.



*Instrumental ensemble, 17th century.*

## INTRODUCTION

Music has accompanied human existence for as long as we know. Initially, the first musical instrument was the voice, and it is thought that songs developed to accompany work and to put meaning into ritual. Gradually percussive instruments were introduced to beat time to make work more profitable and interesting.

Wind instruments, such as the blowing of sea shells and animal horns, were introduced later: first as signals and later, with the discovery of how to change their pitch, into musical instruments.

In primitive society, with conflicts at one's doorstep at all times, the discovery that the taut string of a bow could make a sound when pressed to a hollow, may have led to the discovery of the first string instruments. Thus, from the world around them, humans discovered musical instruments and with these new discoveries and further experimentation, new tastes in music developed.

Musical instruments and the music they produce reflect the economic, technical and cultural environment in which people lived and their psychological make-up.

Ukraine is rich in musical instruments and amongst these instruments are folk instruments many of which cannot be found anywhere else in the world. Some are variants which have gone through a long process of change to adapt to their new environment.

The first written sources which mention musical instruments in Ukraine date back to ancient Greek chronicles of the 6th century. Wandering Arab scholars paid great attention to the musical instruments used in Kievan Rus'; but it wasn't until the 19th century that investigative studies were made into Ukrainian musical instruments. These included the publications of Mykola Lysenko — the father of modern Ukrainian music.

Later work was done by Hnat Khotkevych, who in 1930 published his then-controversial book "Musical Instruments of the Ukrainian People", which included a wealth of material on Ukrainian folk instruments.

In 1967 Andriy Humeniuk published a similar book called "Ukrainian Folk Instruments" which contained new material on some of the more recent developments and discoveries.

Another interesting recent addition published in 1981 is "The Orchestra of Ukrainian Folk Instruments" by Perekop Ivanov, which contains many of the latest developments employed to perfect Ukrainian folk instruments and to organise them into a well-defined orchestral group.

Musical instruments are generally classified into a number of groups, each of which has specific subgroups, depending on how the sound is produced.

1. Chordophones (string)
  - a. Plucked
  - b. Fricative
  - c. Percussive

2. Aerophones (wind)
  - a. Labial (flute-like)
  - b. Glotophones (reed instruments)
  - c. Mouthpiece instruments
3. Membranophones
  - a. Percussive
    - i. tuned
    - ii. untuned
  - b. Fricative

## STRING INSTRUMENTS (Chordophones)

There are three types of string instruments which are differentiated from one another by the way in which the sound is produced on their strings.

In the first group we find the instruments plucked with the fingers or a plectrum. These include the husli, the kobza, the torban, and the bandura.

The second group contains the lira (hurdy-gurdy), the hudok, the violin, the basolia and the kozobas.

The percussive string instruments are represented by the hammer dulcimer.

## PLUCKED INSTRUMENTS

### The Husli

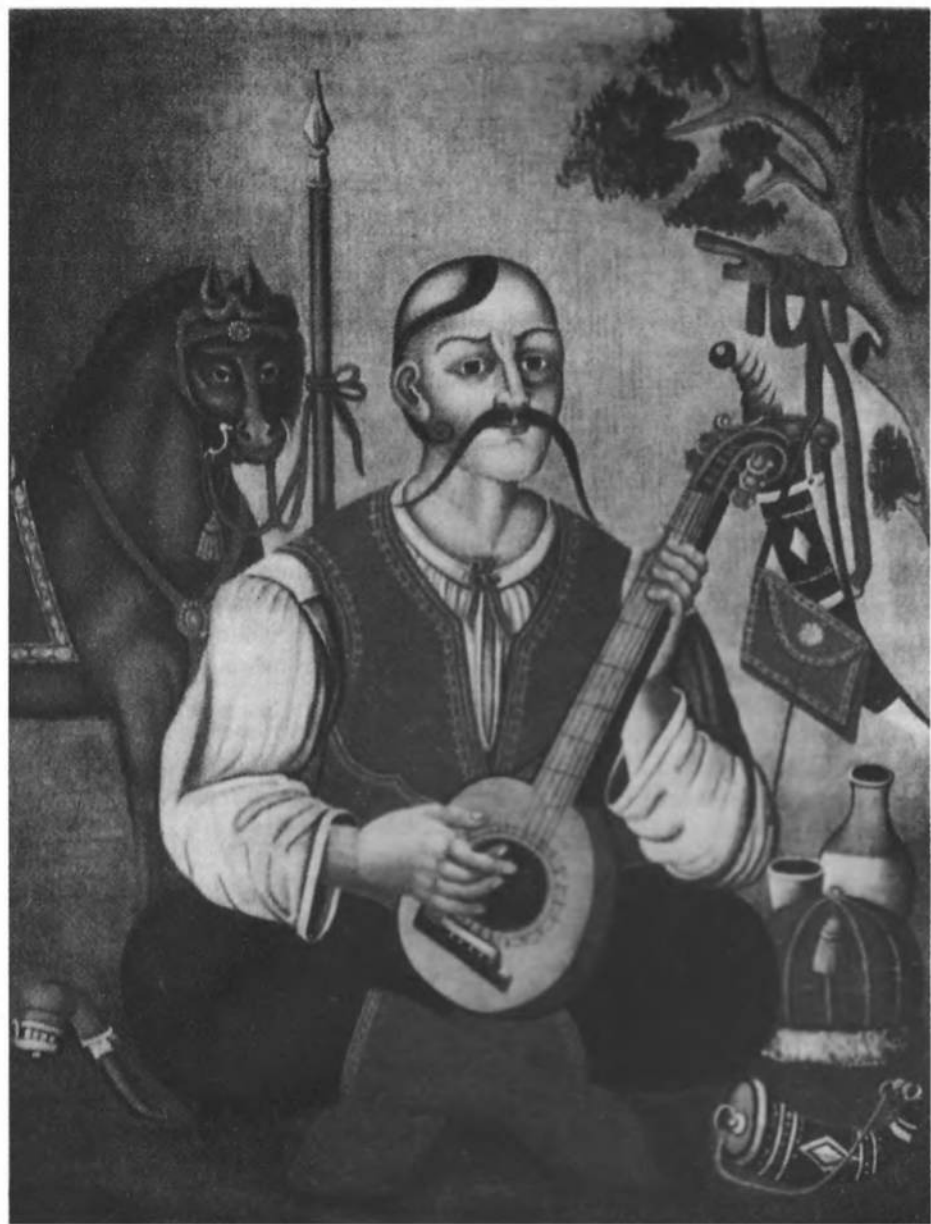
The word husli was, in the times of Kievan Rus', the generic word for a string musical instrument. Later the word became associated with a psaltery-like instrument which existed in Kievan Rus' and continued to be played in Ukraine until the 19th century. The root of the word is derived from the early Slavic word "gosl", which meant "string" and can be found in other Slavic languages. In Bulgaria and Yugoslavia gusle denotes a one-stringed fiddle. In Western Ukraine and in Byelorussia it is often used to denote a fiddle and sometimes a ducted flute.

In 1738 a special school of music was opened in Hlukhiv, Chernihiv Province, which taught bandura, violin and husli. It is thought that the husli influenced the introduction of treble strings on the bandura and that because of this the bandura replaced the husli. In the 19th century it was played primarily by townfolk and clergy.

The husli had 11 to 36 gut or metal diatonically tuned strings and was made in various sizes. It is thought to have come to Rus' from Byzantium. The husli is no longer in widespread use as a Ukrainian folk instrument, though it continues to be used in Russia.



*Husli ensemble, 16th century.*



*The legendary Cossack Mamai playing the kobza.*



## **The Kobza**

The history of the kobza can be traced back to 6th century Greek chronicles and it was often mentioned by wandering Arab scholars who visited Rus' in the 10-11th centuries. The term itself is thought to be of Middle Eastern extraction and was introduced into the Ukrainian language in the 13th century to differentiate this instrument from other string instruments generically known as husli.

The kobza became a favourite instrument of the Ukrainian Cossacks and was widely played by the rural masses and in the courts of Polish kings and Russian tsars, where it served a role similar to the lute in Western Europe. Unfortunately, the kobza, like its close cousin the lute, fell into disuse and was gradually replaced by the bandura, guitar and mandolin, with the term kobza later becoming a synonym for the bandura. The instrument was traditionally carved out of a single piece of wood and consisted of a soundboard with strings strung across it, the number of strings varying from three to eight. Occasionally it would have frets made of gut and three to four additional strings strung along the soundboard. The strings were either plucked with a plectrum or with the ends of the fingers.

In recent times attempts have been made to revive the original fretted kobza. However, this has met with only limited success.

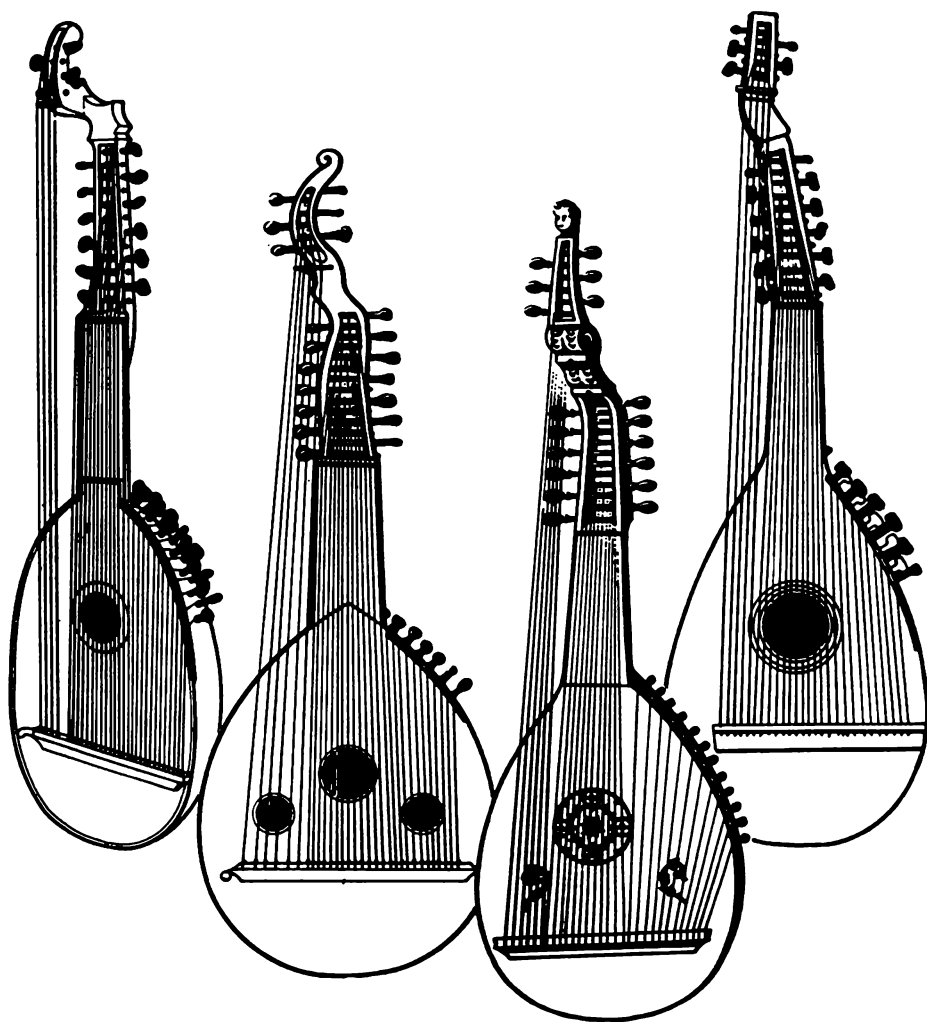
The contemporary fretted kobza is made in two versions. The first is a seven-stringed instrument and the second a four-stringed orchestral variant. The orchestral kobza is tuned in fifths like the strings of the mandolin and violin, being played with a plectrum. It is used in orchestras of Ukrainian folk instruments, and is produced in prima, alto, tenor, bass and contrabass sizes.

The Rumanians and Moldavians also have a similar instrument which they call a cobza which appeared in the 16th century and has 8 to 12 gut or metal strings tuned in fourths or fifths. It originated in Bukovyna and is also the term used to describe the guitar.

## **The Torban (Teorban)**

The torban is a variant of the bandura and is often referred to as the gentleman's bandura. The torban differs from the standard bandura in that the body is glued from ribs like that of a lute or mandolin. It has two pegboxes on the end of the neck, one of which houses a second set of bass strings. Some torbans had frets on the neck which made them into a more universal instrument by combining aspects of the bandura and kobza. The torban has approximately 30 strings, usually made of gut, although instruments with up to 60 strings are known to have existed. These instruments were very popular among the gentry and nobility of Poland, Russia and Ukraine, and it is known that prominent Ukrainians such as Hetman Mazepa and Kyrylo Rozumovsky played the torban.

The torban is thought to have been influenced by the French theorbo, which



### *Torbans.*

Cossacks under the command of Colonel Ivan Sirko would have observed during their campaigns with the French during the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). The Cossacks would have had bandurists among their ranks and it is thought that these may have been the first to develop the hybrid instrument.

The torban began to fall into disuse in the 19th century. It was more difficult to play and make, and also more expensive. In the early 1920s the torban was branded antiproletarian by the Soviets, because of its association with court aristocratic

musical traditions. This marked the end of its use in Ukraine, where it was replaced by the guitar and bandura.

Certain structural peculiarities of the torban have made an appearance in the contemporary bandura: the doubled bass pegbox and the glued back, the latter being used extensively on the Lviv banduras.



*Kobzar Honcharenko and torbanist O. Borodai (standing).*

## The Classical Bandura

The classical bandura developed from its predecessor, the kobza, in the 14-15th centuries. The first mentions of a Ukrainian bandurist date back to Polish chronicles of 1441. The bandura differed from the kobza in that it had no frets along the neck and the major playing was done on treble strings known as *prystrunky*, which were placed to one side of the strings strung across the neck.

The bandura became very popular among the Ukrainian Cossacks and was often played in the courts of Poland and Russia.

The size and shape of the classical bandura has remained remarkably stable for the



*Heorhiy Tkachenko with a classical bandura.*

past 300 years. Instruments which date back to the 1600s are very similar to those used at the turn of the century by the wandering minstrels known as kobzars.

The classical bandura had 20 to 24 metal strings tuned diatonically. The back was hewn from a single piece of timber, with a soundboard of spruce or pine. The tuning pegs were made of wood and there was hardly any metal on the instrument. The instrument often had a belt to aid in holding it when being played or carried.

The classical bandura was chiefly used by kobzars in solo performances as an accompaniment to epic ballads called dumas, also for religious psalms and historical folk songs. It was also used for the playing of dance tunes.

Few exponents of the traditional classical bandura exist today, although interest in the instrument is growing.

Occasionally one finds the use of the word bandore, instead of bandura. This has resulted from the suggestion by the Russian academic O. Famintsyn that the Ukrainian people had borrowed the bandura from England, from a guitar-like instrument developed in 1561 by John Rose called a bandore. This has since been disproved.



*Classical bandura.*

## The Kharkiv Bandura

The Kharkiv style of bandura playing was developed by Hnat Khotkevych. Khotkevych published the first textbook for bandura in 1909 in Lviv. This text introduced the method of playing the classical bandura with 20 strings. In the 1920s the bandura was introduced as an instrument taught at the Kharkiv Conservatory, and gradually a new instrument evolved having 30 to 31 strings, tuned diatonically through four octaves. The instrument was held in such a way that the player was able to use both hands over all the strings. It was later made in three orchestral sizes: piccolo, prima and bass.

The Kharkiv bandura was developed into a fully chromatic instrument by the Honcharenko brothers and further development is taking place in North America. The Kharkiv bandura is now almost extinct in Ukraine and is only used among emigre musicians, mainly because the Kharkiv instrument is at present not available in Ukraine.



*Hryhory Baschul with a Kharkiv bandura.*

## **The Kiev Bandura**

The Kiev bandura was developed in the 20th century, based on the classical instrument. The instrument differed from the classical bandura in that it had many more strings, with additional chromatic strings introduced onto the instrument by the Kiev Bandurist Chorus in 1918. Since that time the instrument has been stable in its shape and method of playing.

The contemporary Kiev bandura is made in a number of sizes and types. The most common is the standard 'prima' instrument made by the Chernihiv Instrument Factory with 12 bass and 43 treble strings tuned chromatically through almost five octaves. The professional concert bandura is the same size and shape as the 'prima', however it has 62 to 65 strings and a mechanism like that of a harp to change the tun-



*Girls playing the Kiev bandura.*



*T. Paliyivets — master bandura-maker, Poltava, 1931.*

ing of the strings. Smaller-sized instruments for children with 42 strings are also available, and alto, bass and contrabass banduras are used in professional bandura choruses in Ukraine.

The Kiev bandura has developed into a very capable virtuoso instrument, with original music being composed for it by professional composers. Gradually it is leaving the confines of its folk environment. Courses in bandura are now being taught in a number of conservatoriums in Ukraine and brilliant performers are now emerging.





*Vasyl Herasymenko and his Lviv concert bandura.*

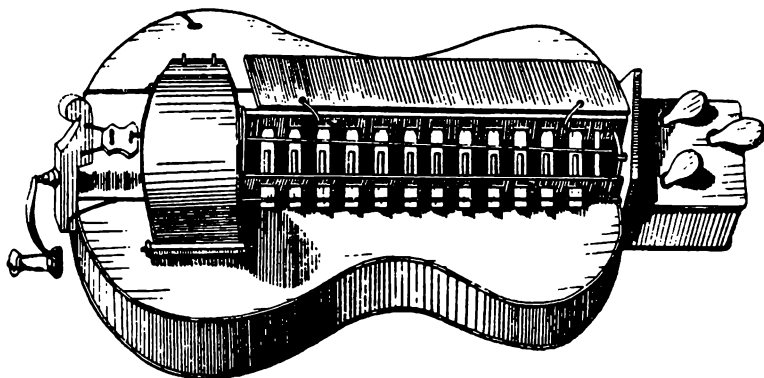
## FRICATIVE STRING INSTRUMENTS

### The Lira (Hurdy-gurdy)

The lira, or relia, is a variant of the hurdy-gurdy, an instrument which can trace its history back to the 10th century. It is thought that the lira was introduced into Ukraine in the 17th century and was used as an instrument to accompany religious psalms and epic ballads performed by wandering blind musicians called *lirnyky*. Occasionally *lirnyky* were hired to play dance music at weddings. They often organised themselves into guilds or brotherhoods with their own laws and secret language.

The traditional lira has three strings, one on which the melody is played with the aid of a special keyboard, the other two producing a drone of a fifth. The sound is produced by a wooden wheel which is rotated by a crank held in the right hand. This wheel rubs against the strings, setting them in motion like a bow on a violin.

A number of different types of chromatic liras have been produced in Ukraine, however interest in the instrument has declined considerably.



*Lira.*

### The Fiddle (Skrypka)

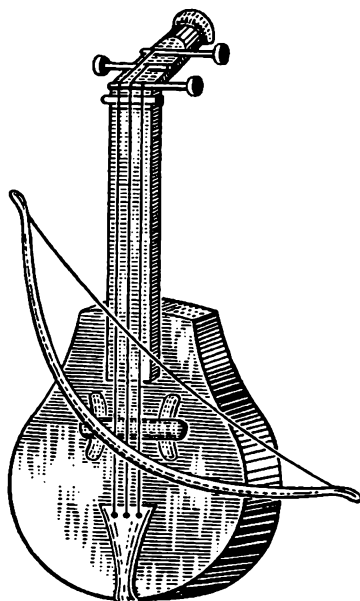
The traditional fiddle has now been replaced by the standard violin, however the folk tradition of playing the instrument is still alive. The fiddle is a prominent instrument at weddings, found in ensembles of *troyista muzyka* which usually perform dance music. Fiddlers also play solo works of a program type for listening.

Many of the traditional fiddles were very crude in construction, some being just boards with strings attached. The Ukrainian writer Ivan Franko said that "in Galicia one has to make the fiddle from a pine tree which has been struck by lightning. Then it will be loud."

## The Hudok

One of the most ancient bowed string instruments of the Slavs is the hudok. It has three strings and is played with a bow. The hudok was popular from the times of Kievan Rus', when it was used primarily for the playing of dance music. It was often used by the buffoon musicians and accompanied by the husli. An 11th century fresco on the walls of the St. Sophia Cathedral in Kiev shows a hudok player with a group of other musicians. The instrument was approximately 80cm (31.5in) in length and was balanced on the knee whilst it was played.

The back of the hudok was carved from a single piece of timber and the three strings were bowed all at once, with two of the strings providing a constant drone whilst a melody was played on the third. The hudok was made redundant by the violin and the lira and is no longer used in Ukraine.



*Hudok.*

## The Basolia

The basolia has now been replaced by the standard cello. Previously these instruments were homemade and of very rough construction, usually having only three strings and being larger than the standard cello. Sometimes the soundboard was sewn rather than glued to the body.

The basolia was an instrument which was often ridiculed for its quality of sound and the skill of the player. All the same, wedding music without it was unthinkable. The basolia was introduced into Ukraine from the West after the fiddle was established, however there are mentions which date back to the 17th century describing the wedding of Bohdan Khmelnytsky's son Yuri, where an orchestra containing this instrument performed.



*Basolia (left) and a three-stringed alto fiddle.*

## **The Kozobas (Byjkoza)**

The kozobas is a bowed and percussive instrument which is popular in folk ensembles in Western Ukraine. It is basically a wooden pole joined to a drum at one end with a cymbal hanging from the other end. The drum membrane acts as the soundboard for one or two strings strung from the end of the pole to the end of the drum. The strings are played with a bow which occasionally hits the cymbal hanging from the end of the pole. Recent developments include instruments with four strings tuned like those of a double bass.



*Kozobas.*

## PERCUSSIVE STRING INSTRUMENTS

### The Tsymbaly (Hammer Dulcimer, Cymbalom)

The hammer dulcimer is an instrument which is well known in many countries. Its origins can be traced to the Middle East, where it was known as the santur, and it is thought that the instrument was first brought to Ukraine during the Crusades. It spread to Ukraine through Hungary and Rumania, where it is known as a cymbalom and was probably introduced into Ukraine by wandering Gypsy and Jewish musicians. However, the earliest mentions of the Ukrainian term "tsymbaly" date back only to the 17th century. In Moldavia earlier mentions dating to 1546 can be found.

The hammer dulcimer is similar in construction to the husli, consisting of a large wooden box with a soundboard on which strings are strung across in courses of 3 to 5 strings. Two bridges are placed on the soundboard over which the strings are stretched. These divide the strings in such a way that each course of strings can produce two different notes.



*Tsymbaly player in the Carpathian Mountains.*

**The strings** are struck with wooden hammers. Usually the instrument is played in a **seated position** — placed on the knees of the performer — or in a standing position, **with the aid** of a long belt which goes around the neck of the performer.

In the 1950s the Ukrainian tsymbaly was chromaticised, and had legs and a damper pedal added. The Chernihiv factory began to manufacture these instruments in three different sizes: prima, alto and bass. In recent times however, the concert cymbalom developed in Hungary is becoming more popular. This instrument contains a full chromatic range of four and a half octaves.

The small tsymbaly is still played and is known as a Hutsul tsymbaly, to differentiate it from the concert instrument.

Similar instruments can be found in Greece, Rumania, Lithuania, Poland, Byelorussia, Bohemia, Latvia and Hungary.

## **WIND INSTRUMENTS (Aerophones)**

### **The Luska**

The luska is a very simple instrument made by cutting a thin plate from the horn of a cow or by using a root from a birch tree. Performing a scale on this “instrument” is not possible, however rhythmic figures around the melody are quite easy. In recent times the instrument has been replaced by pieces of clean photographic film cut to the size of a safety razor.

The instrument is played by placing it between the bottom lip and the teeth. The upper teeth just touch the edge of the instrument. All one does to obtain a high-pitched sound is to tighten the upper lip and blow. Slackening the lip produces a lower sound.

Another way to play it is to place it on the lower lip and to suck air in against it.

### **The Whistle (Svystun)**

This instrument is thought of as a children’s toy and is used throughout Ukraine. It is usually made of clay in the form of an animal such as a rooster, bird, horse or sheep. It has a hole to blow into and sometimes side holes, which when opened and closed can change the pitch of the note produced. On some instruments it is possible to play simple melodies.

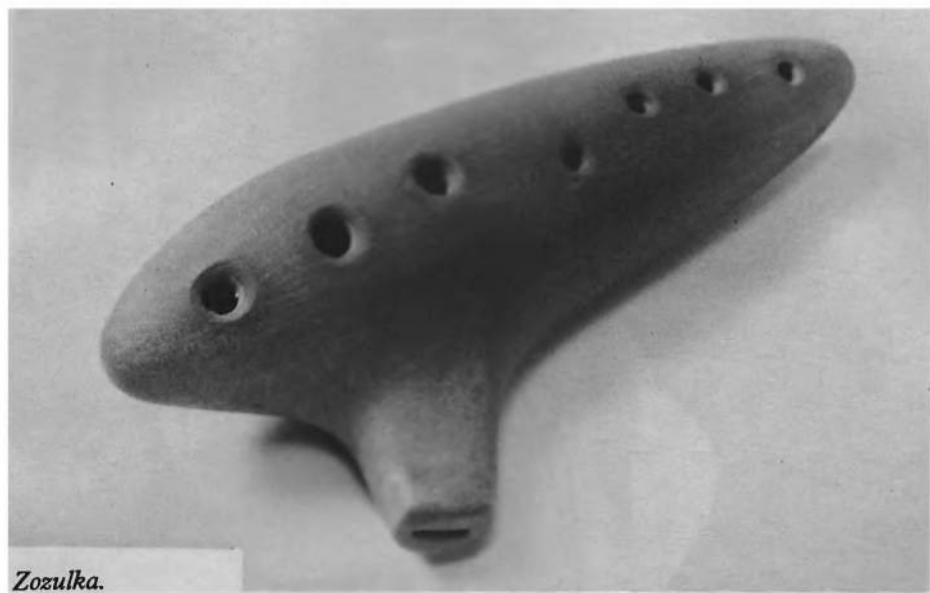
### **The Zozulka (Okaryna, Ocarina)**

The ocarina was originally invented about 1860 in Italy and is a vessel flute in the shape of an egg with 10 holes. The name in Italian means “little goose”.



*Selection of whistles.*

The Ukrainian ocarina belongs to the group of whistle instruments and is in fact a sophisticated svystun. Usually these instruments are made of clay, with seven or eight and sometimes 10 soundholes. The instrument is widespread in the Carpathian Mountains in Ukraine among the Hutsuls, who call it a zozulka, a name derived from the Ukrainian word for a small cuckoo bird.



*Zozulka.*



## The Sopilka Family

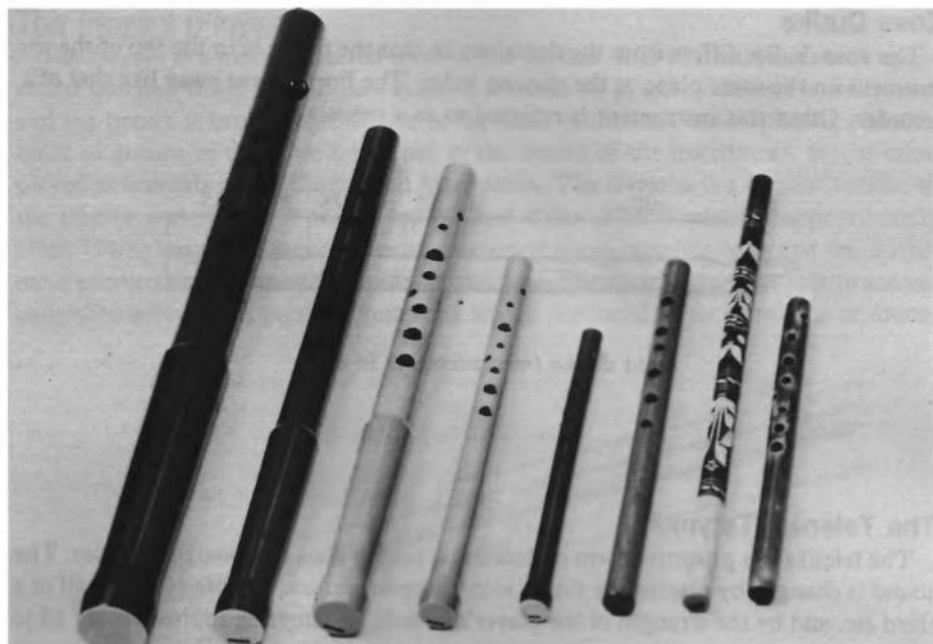
The group of flute-like woodwind instruments is known generically as “sopilkas” in Ukrainian. The use of this term, however, has caused much confusion in differentiating the various types of folk wind instruments. This is because technically the term *sopilka*, by its meaning, should only apply to a non-fipple folk flute, whilst the term *dentsivka* should apply to instruments of the fipple variety. Unfortunately this is not so, and great confusion surrounds the naming of these instruments.

### The Sopilka (Frlka, Sopivka)

These are instruments which have no fipple or *dentse*. They consist of a hollow pipe with six to ten holes. The pipe itself can be made of any material, metal and plastic included. The usual number of holes is six and additional holes allow chromatic notes to be easily produced on the instrument. The important difference is the blowing end, where the player must break his breath against the wall of the tube. This produces a sound similar to that of the flute.

The *frilka* is usually smaller than the *sopilka* and has a higher sound, but is made in the same way.





*Dentsivkas (left to right) bass, tenor, alto, prima, piccolo, diatonic, souvenir-type; frilka.*

### **The Dentsivka (Dudka, Sopilka, Mala Fleita, Denchivka)**

The dentsivka is often called a sopilka, however it differs from the true sopilka in that it has a fipple, like a recorder. It is classified as a duct flute. Usually it is made from a tube of wood approximately 30 to 40cm (12-16in) long. Holes are cut or burnt into the tube and a fipple made at one end. The internal diameter is usually 12 to 14mm (0.47-0.55in) with the walls of the tube being 2 to 3mm (0.08-0.12in) thick.

In the traditional instruments the tuning varied with the length of the tube, but was usually diatonic, with a range of two and a half octaves.

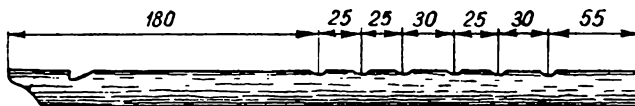
Some dentsivkas (from Western Ukraine) have five sound holes.

In recent times chromatic ten-hole fingering was developed for this instrument, which has carried on to most of the other instruments in the sopilka family.

The dentsivka is made in a number of sizes from piccolo tuned in F, prima in C, alto in G, tenor in F, to the bass in C. Concert versions of the prima are available, the best being sold in Ukrainian music stores under the title of "mala fleita".

## Kosa Dudka

The *kosa dudka* differs from the *dentsivka* in that the fipple is in the top of the instrument on the same plane as the playing holes. The fipple is cut away like that of a recorder. Often this instrument is referred to as a *dentsivka*.



*Kosa dudka (measurements in mm).*

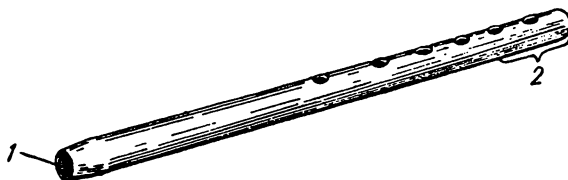
## The Telenka (Telynka)

The *telenka* is a primitive form of *dentsivka*, only it does not have fingerholes. The sound is changed by placing the finger into the open end and covering it by a half or a third etc. and by the strength of the player's breath. Its length is approximately 35 to 40cm (14-16in), although instruments can range up to 60cm (24in) in length.

This instrument is also found in Rumania, especially in the Bukovyna area where it is known as the *tilinca*.

## The Zubivka (Skosivka, Skisna Dudka)

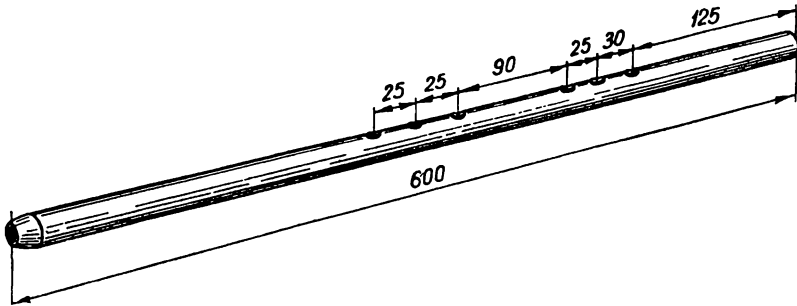
The *zubivka* is one of the oldest folk instruments in Ukraine. It was described by wandering Arab scholars in the 11th century. This instrument is very similar to the *telenka*, only instead of having a fipple it is played like the *sopilka* or *frilka* by having the breath break against the side of the pipe. The surface is wedge-shaped. The *zubivka* is approximately 60cm (24 in) long.



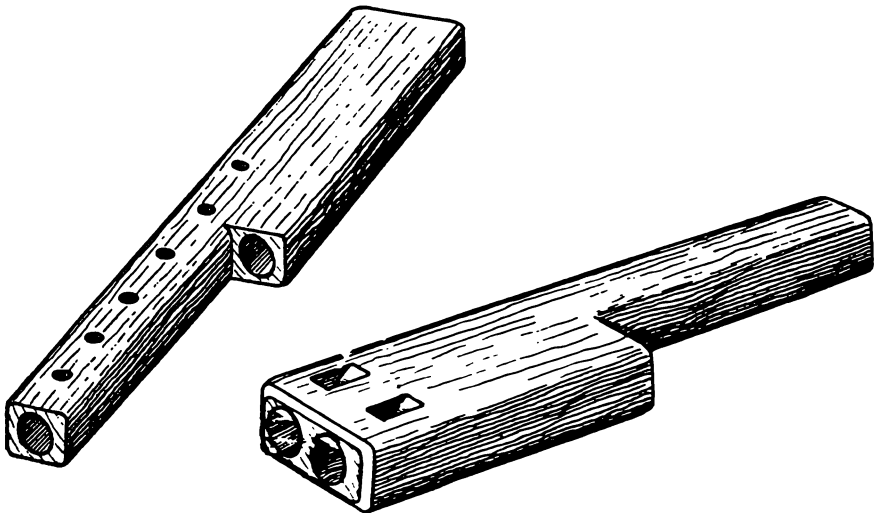
*Zubivka 1. mouth 2. resonator.*

## The Floyara (Floyarka)

The floyara is a more perfected form of the sopilka. It is characterised as an open-ended notched flute. The floyara is about a metre in length. One end is sharpened and the breath is broken against one of the sides of the tube at the playing end. Six holes in groups of three are burnt out in the centre of the instrument. It was often played at funerals in the Carpathian Mountains. The floyarka is a smaller version of the floyara and is similar to the sopilka and frilka. The floyarka is approximately 60cm (24in) long. The mouthpiece is sharpened into a conelike edge and the instrument produces a sound similar to that of the flute. Shepherds were also able to accompany themselves with guttural humming which produced an ostinato tone or drone.



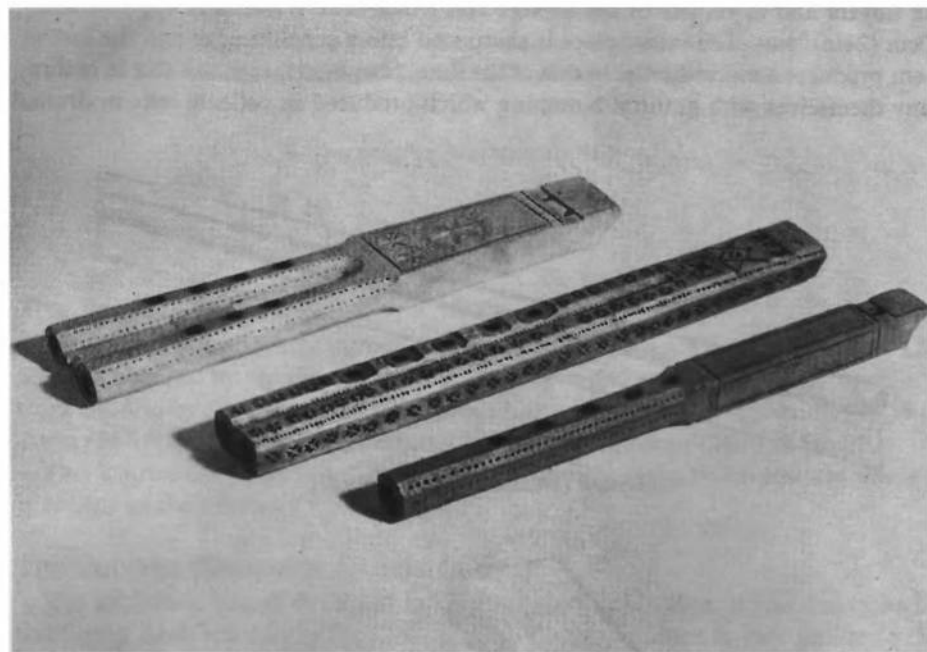
*Floyara (measurements in mm).*



*Pivtoradentsivka.*

## The Pivtoradentsivka

The pivtoradentsivka is translated as one and a half dentsivkas. It consists of two dentsivkas joined together into one instrument. Only one of the pipes has fingerholes. The other acts as a drone. The drone pipe in the pivtoradentsivka is usually shorter than the playing pipe. The instrument has the same fingering as the standard dentsivka.



*Zholomiha, dvodentsivka and dentsivka (bottom), 19th century.*

## Dvodentsivka (Dubeldentsivka)

The dvodentsivka means literally two dentsivkas, and this is exactly what it is. Two dentsivkas are joined together into one instrument but only one has playing holes. The other pipe, although it is the same length, has no holes and acts as a drone.

## Zholomiha (Zholomiga)

The zholomiha is similar to the dvodentsivka, only in this case there are fingerholes on both pipes, usually four on one and three on the other. The instrument is usually carved out of a single piece of wood.

## The Kuvytsi (Svyryli, Naj)

The kuvytsi are one of the most ancient of folk instruments and are better known in the West as the pan pipes. Pan pipes have been found in archaeological excavations in Ukraine which date back some 5,000 years. The instrument consists of a number of pipes each of which, when blown endwise, produces one sound.

Various versions of the kuvytsi exist in Ukraine, such as the one-sided kuvytsi, which consist of a system of pipes from large to small in one direction, or double-sided kuvytsi, which have their largest pipe in the centre.

These instruments were used by ensembles in Chernihiv Province and also widely in Western Ukraine.

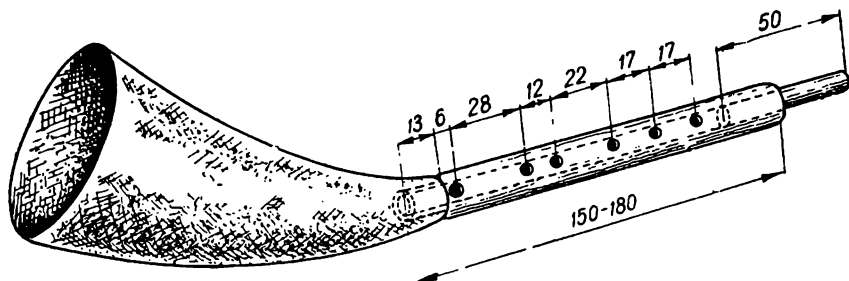
In recent years the Moldavian concert version of the pan pipes called the "naj" has been introduced successfully. These instruments allow chromatic notes to be readily obtained, a semitone lower than the primary sound of the pipe. This is done by changing the angle of the pipes in relation to the player's lips.



*Kuvytsi.*

## The Horn (Rih, Rizhok, Lihava, Cossack Horn)

An instrument which was popular in Eastern Ukraine, with between three and six fingerholes, or sometimes none. Usually it was made from a cylindrical reed with a cow's horn to form the bell. The mouthpiece usually has a single reed, although occasionally double-reed instruments can be found.



*Rizhok (measurements in mm).*

## The Trembita

The trembita is the Ukrainian version of the alpine horn. It is usually made of spruce which has been split, a central bore dug out and then glued together and bound with birch bark. It is usually about three metres (10 feet) long, being 2.3 to 5cm (1-2in) wide at the mouthpiece and 6cm (3½in) wide at the bell. Shorter trembitas of half to one metre in length can be found. This shorter instrument is often called a "vivcharska dudka" (shepherd's pipe). The mouthpiece is often made from a separate piece of wood.

The range is approximately three octaves, encompassing the natural harmonic series as in the French horn.

The trembita was primarily used in signalling events such as the coming of visitors, enemies or death in the mountain regions of Ukraine and thus a system of elaborate signals was devised. Carols were also played on the instrument at Christmas.

Like many of the instruments of Western Ukraine, the trembita is not unique to the Ukrainian people. Instruments such as the trombita, trabita, trebita can be found in Poland and the bucium in Rumania.



*Hutsuls playing trembitas.*



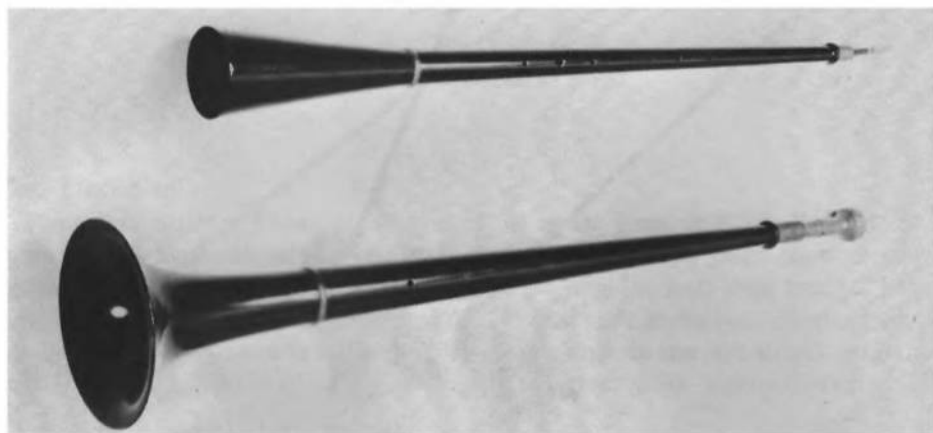
### **The Wooden Trumpet (Truba, Lihava, Cossack Trumpet)**

The truba or lihava is an instrument of the surma type, only with a mouthpiece like that of a standard trumpet made of wood. The instrument has seven to ten soundholes and is presently used in contemporary folk instrument orchestras.

### **The Surma (Shawm)**

The surma is a type of shawm which was widespread in the armies of the Cossack host. It is thought that the instrument was introduced into Ukraine from the Caucasus or Turkey, where the surma exists under the names zurna and surnai.

The instrument is made of wood with a conical bore, having a bell at one end and a double reed similar to that used in the oboe at the other. It usually has nine to ten soundholes and is capable of chromatic sounds through a range of dynamics. The instrument is reminiscent of the sound of the oboe. Presently the surma has found its way into orchestras of Ukrainian folk instruments in a range of sizes such as prima, alto and bass.



*Surma (top) and Cossack trumpet.*

### **The Bagpipes (Volynka, Duda, Koza)**

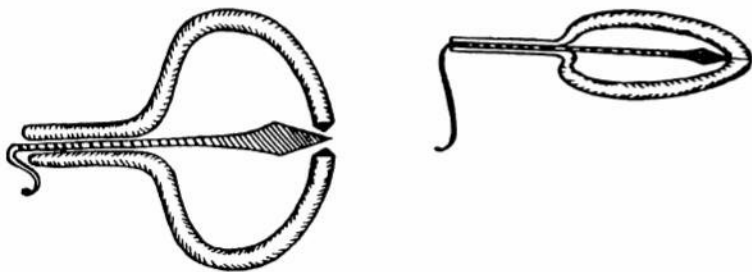
The bagpipes are popular in many countries of the world. They are constructed around a goat-skin air reservoir into which air is blown through a pipe with a valve. A number of playing pipes (two to four) extend from the bag holding the air. The main playing pipe has five to seven, sometimes eight, fingerholes on which the melody is played. The other pipes produce a drone, usually a single tonic note or a perfect fifth. Each of these playing pipes has a double reed, usually made from a goose quill. In recent times this instrument has lost the popularity it had previously, and is rarely used today. It was originally found in Western and Central Ukraine.



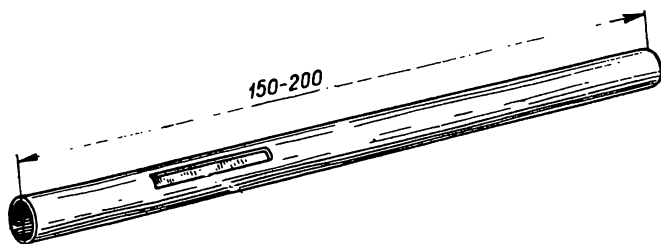
*Ukrainian bagpipes.*

### **The Jaw Harp (Drymba, Varhan)**

The drymba is commonly known in the West as the jaw harp or jew's-harp and is made of metal in a form similar to a small lyre. In the centre is a stainless-steel tongue. The instrument is held up to the mouth with the left hand against the teeth whilst the right hand plucks the stainless-steel blade. The player's mouth serves as a resonator. Whilst playing the drymba, the performer often hums a melody.



*Jaw harp.*

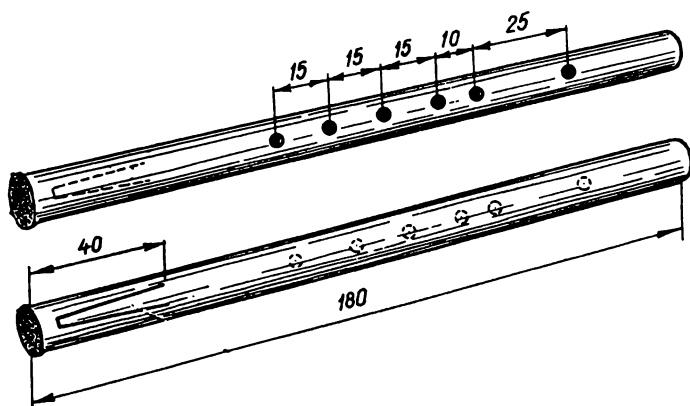


*Ocheretyna.*

### The Ocheretyna or Ocheretianka

The ocheretyna is similar in principle to the kazoo. It has been used in Ukraine by folk musicians for a long time. Sometimes folk violinists would place one in their lips and hum whilst playing, producing a duet.

The ocheretyna is made from a length of fresh reed which is cut so that the joints are at the ends. A hole is made in one end. One of the walls is cut away so that the internal membrane of the reed is visible. This membrane is near the closed end of the reed and is what vibrates when the instrument is hummed into. An interesting version of this instrument is the reed dudka which is similar to the instrument described above, but with six fingerholes with which to play a melody.



*Reed dudka.*

## PERCUSSIVE INSTRUMENTS

### **The Bubon (Resheto, Taraban, Tamborine)**

The bubon consists of a wooden ring with a diameter of up to 50cm (20in) which has a skin tightened over one or both sides. Occasionally, holes are made in the wooden sides into which metal rings are placed which rattle when the bubon is struck with the hand or a stick. The first mentions of the bubon date back to the 11th century; it was also a popular instrument among the Ukrainian Cossacks.

### **The Cymbals (Tarilky)**

The cymbals were used in Kievan Rus' and are depicted on the walls of St Sophia Cathedral in Kiev. They are also depicted in the Kiev Psalter of 1397. They were used in the military music of the Zaporozhian Cossacks. In the 19th century the cymbals usually formed part of a drum kit, with one cymbal attached to the side of a drum struck by another cymbal held in one hand, whilst the other hand struck the drum with a stick.

### **The Kettle Drum (Timpani, Lytavry, Tulumbasy)**

The kettle drums were used in Ukraine from the times of the Cossacks, and probably earlier as a signalling device to announce meetings and enemy attacks. They have been recently introduced into folk instrument orchestras.



*Cossack striking kettle drum.*

## The Bass Drum

The bass drum is often used with a cymbal to provide rhythmic accompaniment in the troyista muzyka.



*Playing the buhay.*

## The Bukhalo

This is a type of large drum often used in dance music. It is fixed to the player with a belt so that he can also dance and move about when needed. The bukhalo is struck with a stick and often has a cymbal joined to the side of the instrument which is struck with a metal rod or another cymbal, to produce unexpected rhythmic devices.

## The Buhay (Berebenytsia, Bika)

The buhay is an instrument which originated in Western Ukraine and is classified as a friction drum. It consists of a conical barrel, sometimes a bucket. A sheep's membrane is stretched across the top end, with a hole in its centre through which a tuft of horse hair with a knot at one end is passed. Usually two performers are needed to operate the instrument: one to hold it, the other to pull the horsehair with moistened fingers. Five to six different sounds can be obtained from the instrument, depending on the skill of the player.

It plays an important part in New Year and Christmas rituals and can also be found in Rumania, Hungary and Lithuania.



*Derkach.*

## The Derkach

The derkach is occasionally used in Ukrainian folk instrument orchestras, but is usually found as a children's toy. The derkach is made by taking a piece of rounded hard wood and cutting teeth into it. Another piece of wood is joined to this with a tongue. As this piece rotates around the rounded piece, the tongue makes a noise as it passes over the teeth.

## The Torokhkalo or Kalatalo

This is an instrument which is used in folk ensembles whenever a drum is not available. It was also used by night watchmen to scare away intruders. The instrument is made from a piece of wood with a handle. A second piece of wood, shorter than the first, is joined to the original piece by metal rings near the handle. A hole is drilled through both pieces at one end and a wooden bolt is placed through the hole so that the additional piece can move a small distance. When the instrument is swung back and forth it produces a very loud sound, amplified by the stillness of the night.

## The Briazkaltsia

This is an instrument consisting of copper or brass plates strung from a wire. In the past it was made of silver. When the instrument was shaken it produced a jingling sound reminiscent of small bells. The instrument is now no longer used.



*Kalatalo.*

## The Zatula (Rubal, Kachanka)

The zatula is not really a musical instrument, but rather a household item for washing and ironing clothes which is occasionally used as a percussion instrument. The kachanka is a piece of wood with grooves carved into it. A wooden rod was run over these grooves to soften clothes after washing.

The kachanka is played in a humorous way by placing the rounded rod under the chin and using the kachanka as a bow, playing over the road. The rasping sound thus produced is similar to that of the derkach.

## The Horseshoe

In some folk instrument ensembles a steel horseshoe dangling from the end of a gut string is struck with a piece of metal wire. This produces a high-pitched ringing sound similar to a triangle.



*Playing the kachanka (A. Bazylevych, 1968).*



## RECENTLY INTRODUCED FOREIGN FOLK INSTRUMENTS

In the late 19th and early 20th century a large number of non-Ukrainian folk instruments began to gain popularity in Ukraine. Most of these instruments were introduced from Russia and because of mass-production became readily available, being cheaper, and having better acoustic properties than the traditionally hand-crafted instruments. Thus many of these instruments began to replace the more traditional Ukrainian folk instruments to the extent that many traditional instruments disappeared. Examples of this are the replacement of the torban and fretted kobza with the seven-stringed guitar, the small fretted kobza with the mandolin, and later the four-stringed domra.

Most instruments however underwent changes to suit Ukrainian tastes in music. Consequently, the balalaika received a different tuning and six strings rather than the three it had in Russia. The domra received four strings and a tuning in fifths rather than three strings and a tuning in fourths.

In recent times the development of Ukrainian folk instruments and the reintroduction of traditional instruments to replace these foreign instruments has become a major question. The orchestral kobza with four strings tuned in fifths has been introduced to replace the four-stringed domra; the seven-stringed kobza was designed to replace the seven-stringed guitar.

These efforts however are being met with a certain amount of opposition.

### The Bayan (Accordian)

Originally the bayan was introduced into Eastern Ukraine from Russia in the 1920s and into Western Ukraine after WW II. It is now used extensively and has replaced many of the traditional Ukrainian folk instruments in many regions of Ukraine. The accordian was initially introduced into Russia in the 1830s from Germany and the bayan was first developed into its modern form by the St Petersburg instrument maker P. Sterlingov in 1907.

### The Balalaika

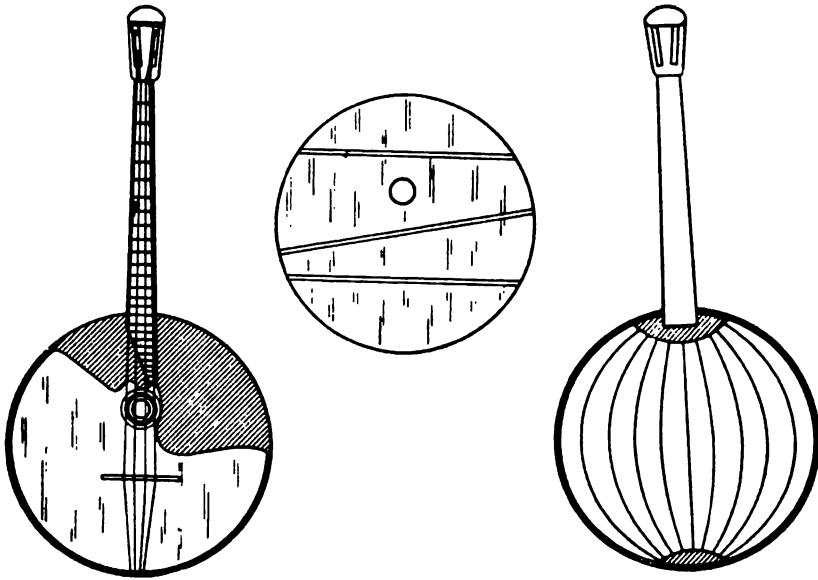
In Ukraine the balalaika was previously known as the "balabaika". It was developed into a modern instrument by Vasyl Andreev in the 1880s after Andreev had seen the popularity of Neapolitan mandolin orchestras in Italy. His first balalaika was made in 1883, but it was only in 1889, after a successful performance in Paris, that the instrument began to gain popularity in Russia.

### The Domra

The domra was also developed by Andreev. In 1895 a round-bodied three-stringed instrument was found in a stable in Russia. Although later it was found to be a version of the balalaika, it continued to be known as the domra and was given a tuning in

fourths, which differed from the tuning of the balalaika. A technique like that of the mandolin was incorporated which used a plectrum.

In Ukraine a four-stringed version of the domra became popular, tuned in fifths. It replaced the then-popular mandolin in the 1930s. This four-stringed version was first introduced in 1920 and is now being replaced by the four-stringed orchestral kobza.



*Domra.*

## The Guitar

The guitar first made its appearance in Spain in the second half of the 15th century and found its way to Russia in the 19th century. The guitars played in Ukraine are similar in construction and tuning to the Russian guitar, where it is thought they were first developed. These instruments have seven metal strings and are usually tuned to an open G tuning.

The development of the seven-stringed guitar was done by the Czech Andriy Sykhra (1773-1850). The tuning used was taken from the Ukrainian torban. It is thought that Sykhra could have been a torbanist. The term "Russian" guitar was applied mainly due to the rise of patriotism in the Russian Empire at the time of the 1812 War.

## The Side Drum (Baraban)

The side drum was used in march and dance music and was introduced into Ukrainian folk music only this century.

## **The Bandurka**

The bandurka is often described as a Russian folk instrument which is now becoming popular in Ukraine. It originated in a district on Russian ethnographic territory in the Urals, appearing in the 1830s and 1840s and was played by Ukrainians working in factories and mines in the Ural mountains. Its shape is that of a small guitar with five strings.

## **The Mandolin**

The mandolin is thought to have replaced the fretted kobza in Ukraine. It was first developed in Italy and became very popular in Europe and in Ukraine. There are two types: the Neapolitan — with a round back — and the Portuguese — with a flat back. In Ukraine it displaced the four-stringed domra.

## **The Clarinet**

The clarinet has become popular in recent times in Western Ukraine, the most widely used being the clarinet in C. It has a simpler construction, without many of the metal keys of the contemporary clarinet. It was used widely in Western Ukraine, being introduced from Czechoslovakia.

## **Brass Instruments**

Brass instruments were introduced through contacts with military music. Today small brass ensembles have become very popular in the playing of funeral and dance music.

# **ENSEMBLE MUSIC**

## **Troyista Muzyka**

The Hutsuls have a legend about the troyista muzyka ensemble:

“Three musicians — a violinist, a tsymbaly player and a piper — fell in love with a maiden. In order to choose her bridegroom, the maiden suggested that they take part in a contest, and she would marry the player whose music the people judged to be the best.

“Each musician in turn played his favourite melody, but as they all played equally well, none of them could win the contest. The maiden asked them to compete once again, this time playing the same melody, but again nobody scored a victory. There was only one thing left to do — to play the tune together. And their joint performance produced such enchanting music that the people decided that it would be a sin to part them and so they continue to play together to this day.”

In this way this music became known as “troyista muzyka”, i.e. trio music.



*"Troyista muzyka" ensemble (A. Przytychowski, 19th century).*

Ensembles of this type usually consist of three musicians: a violinist, a tsymbaly and a bubon player. In some ensembles the instruments can be varied with the inclusion of the basolia or sopilka instead of the bubon. The ensemble's instrumentation, as well as the style of music it plays, differs from region to region.

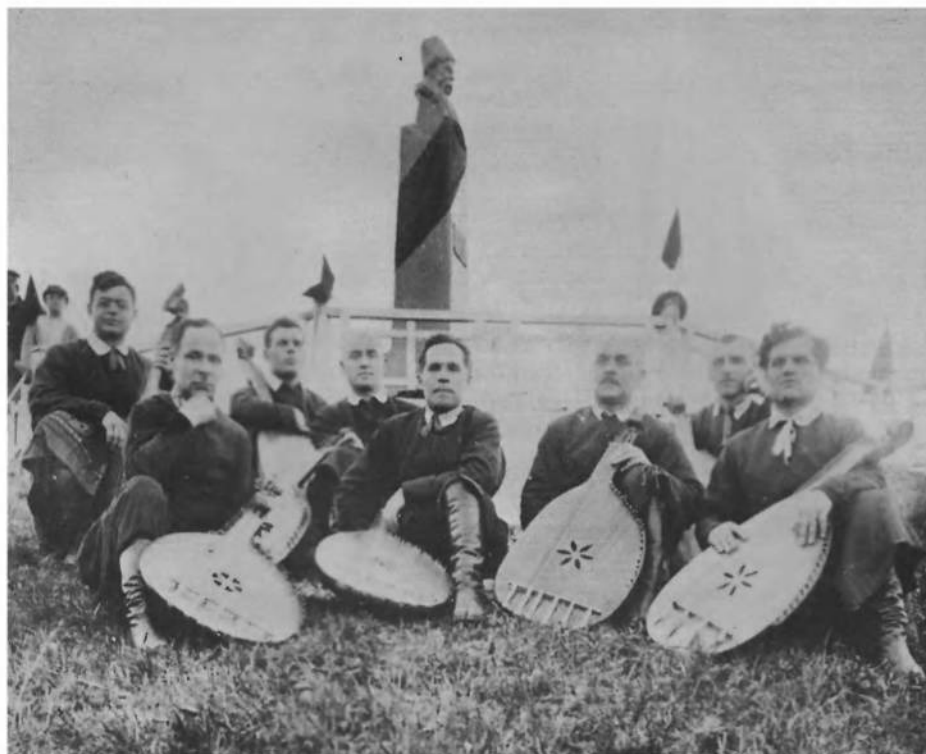
## GENERIC ENSEMBLES

### Bandura Ensembles

Although it is known that bandura ensembles existed in the courts of Polish and Russian nobility in the 16th-18th centuries, the tradition of bandura ensemble-playing did not survive into the 19th century. It was only in 1902 at the Twelfth Archaeological Congress in Kharkiv that the first documented performance of a bandura ensemble took place. This ensemble consisted mainly of blind kobzars and also included a number of hurdy-gurdy players and a troyista muzyka ensemble.

After this historic performance, interest in the bandura became widespread. In a short period of time non-blind intellectuals were learning to play the bandura and gradually ensembles were formed. One of the first, consisting of students from Kiev University led by Mykola Domontovych, gave its first public performance in Kiev in 1908.

In 1917 the "Kiev Kobzar Choir" was formed by Vasyl Yemetz. This ensemble later became the Kiev Bandurist Chorus. In 1925 the famous Poltava Bandurist



*Ukrainian Artistic Capella of Kobzars, Kaniv, 1928.*



*Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus, Detroit, 1958.*

Chorus was formed. These two ensembles were combined in 1935. In the 1930s the number of bandura ensembles reached epidemic proportions. By 1940 there were over 300 bandura ensembles with some 5,000 bandurists. In 1939 for nine positions advertised in the Kiev State Bandurist Chorus, 1,110 applications were received.

During WW II the Kiev State Bandurist Chorus was disbanded and mobilised, unlike the Russian ethnographic ensembles which continued to function, touring the war zone and entertaining the troops. During the German occupation it was reformed in Kiev in 1942, and after a prolonged tour of Europe emigrated to the USA in 1950, settling in Detroit. It is closely associated with its conductor the late Hryhory Kytasty. Since 1984 the group has been led by Volodymyr Kolesnyk.

In 1948 a new State Bandurist Chorus was reformed in Kiev under the direction of Olexander Minkivsky.

Other amateur bandurist ensembles became very popular not only in Ukraine, but in the Kuban region (Mykola Bohuslavsky, 1912), in Moscow (Vasyl Shevchenko, 1913) and in Prague (Vasyl Yemetz, 1925). With post WW II migration to countries such as North America, South America and Australia, ensembles have been formed in most cities which have a Ukrainian population.

## UKRAINIAN FOLK INSTRUMENT ORCHESTRAS

The idea of an orchestra of Ukrainian folk instruments was slow in developing in Ukraine. The first performance of such a group can be traced back to the 1902 Archaeological Congress in Kharkiv, which under the direction of Hnat Khotkevych included not only banduras, but hurdy-gurdies, violins, a basolia and a tamborine.

In 1922 Leonid Haydamaka, a student of Hnat Khotkevych, organised a bandura ensemble in the Metalworkers Club in Kharkiv. This ensemble slowly introduced banduras of various sizes of the Kharkiv type. Gradually other instruments were added such as the tsymbaly, the lira, sopilkas, trembitas and the bagpipes. This orchestra, although of amateur status, became the basis for another orchestra which was formed in the 1930s in the Pioneers Palace. Various performances were given throughout Ukraine and other Soviet republics, and a record was released in the thirties.

In 1943 the Veriovka Choir was formed, with an orchestral group consisting of Ukrainian folk instruments. Most of the regional folk ensembles also have orchestras of Ukrainian folk instruments pertaining to the district from which they originate.

In 1959 an orchestra of Ukrainian folk instruments was formed at the Ukrainian Radio and Television based on a bandura ensemble directed by Andriy Bobyr. This orchestra however very rarely performed on the concert stage. Other orchestras have also been recently formed at various radio centres in Ukraine.

In 1970 an orchestra of Ukrainian folk instruments was formed in Kiev under the auspices of the Music and Choral Society of Ukraine. Under the direction of Yakiv Orlov, the orchestra has recorded a number of records and has now been renamed as the Kiev State Orchestra of Ukrainian Folk Instruments.



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