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## Interpretation of Lesya Ukrainka's feerie drama in the Panel Painting by R. Petruk, "Forest Song". School of M. Storozhenko

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**Abstract.** The study aimed to reveal the individual interpretation of Lesya Ukrainka's drama-feerie in the painting by R. Petruk "Forest Song". Hermeneutical, comparative, iconographic, iconological, historical and cultural methods were used. The correlation between the content of the drama and the mythopoetics of the pictorial image was analysed. The panel painting was studied concerning the theme of earthly and heavenly love in world art. The study analysed the nature of personification of images of natural elements; the conventionality of pictorial and spatial solutions; and the role of attributes in the creation of artistic images. The importance of the heritage of Ukrainian Baroque and world monumental, decorative and easel art in the creation of the personal style of the work was investigated. The compositional and plastic solution of the canvas was analysed. The creative method of R. Petruk was studied in the context of the school of M. Storozhenko and the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture. The study revealed the relationship between the metaphysical nature of Mr R. Petruk's painting "Forest Song" and the nature of Volyn. The innovative approach to creating a synthetic image of a drama-feerie by visual means was demonstrated. The individual nature of perception and interpretation of a literary work was highlighted. The traditions of national and world art, on which the artist relies, were revealed. The key role of the flute in the symbolism of the panel painting was demonstrated; the leading role of music in the harmony of the universe was determined. The author revealed the deep interconnection of the images of Lukash, Mavka, and Lesya Ukrainka with the mythological hero Orpheus. The study traced the common features of Mr. Petruk's painting with the theatre curtain and the Baroque iconostasis. The study emphasised that the peculiarity of R. Petruk's composition is the monumental and decorative mode. The study results are relevant for teachers and students of artistic educational institutions, in lecture courses on the history of Ukrainian art and music culture; for artists, cultural critics and art historians in creating a history of contemporary monumental and decorative art

**Keywords:** mythopoetic image; synthesis of arts; music; symbolism; creative method; intertext; West and East

### INTRODUCTION

The themes of earthly and spiritual love, betrayal and forgiveness, both temporary and eternal values, remain relevant throughout human history. In the visual arts, as in literature, each artist interprets these motifs through personal experience, uniquely contributing to the de-

velopment of cultural discourse. In contrast to literary studies, contemporary art studies on the drama-feerie "The Forest Song" in the visual arts are few. The study by T.V. Goranska & O.P. Spasskova (2023) on the artistic expression of the images of the drama-feerie in the cycle

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of easel graphics by V. Efymenko is noteworthy. The authors analysed the relationship between the illustrations and the text of the feerie drama. In writing this article, conversations with R. Petruk (Tarasenko & Petruk, 2018-2025) and articles by R. Petruk (2020; 2021) on the creative and pedagogical activities of M. Storozhenko were of significant documentary importance.

Since R. Petruk's diploma paper was considered in the context of Storozhenko's school, the scientific research of the Master's students, associate professors and professors of the NAOMA (National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture), who inherited moral and philosophical attitudes towards art, was relevant. In articles devoted to the teacher's artistic and pedagogical system, O.V. Solovei (2020; 2021) emphasised the metaphysical nature of M. Storozhenko's pictorial space, highlighted the synthesis of tradition and innovation that was fundamental to the system, demonstrated the role of the professor in the development of young artists, and emphasised the approach to each student. Developing the ideas of the synthesis of the arts, the rector of the NAOMA, Professor O. Tsugorka (2022) presented an in-depth analysis of the role of scenery in the formation of stage space. Professor I.Y. Pylypenko (2016) researched the history of the monumental painting workshop at the Academy of Arts in the 1920s and 1930s, thereby revealing the connection between the past and the present.

The general issues of the artist's work were explored by several art critics, whose articles were published in a monograph by R. Petruk (2020). R. Mykhailova (2018) on the connection between painting and music inherent in R. Petruk's work. Comparing the young artist to Mozart, the researcher noted the profound thoughts and high feelings, the emotionality and humanism, and the harmonious order of the contemporary painter's works, being similar to the great musician. Noting the role of Ukrainian poetry and folklore in the lyrical style of R. Petruk's art, R. Mykhailova pointed to the reflection of the image of the inspired Mavka from the feerie-tale drama "The Forest Song" in the ideal portraits of the artist's contemporaries. The professor confirmed that the basis of the worldview and practice of the art students of the painting and temple culture workshop created by M. Storozhenko at the NAOMA was the unity of academic realism and irrational religious principles. R. Mykhailova (2018) also outlined the wide range of themes and styles characteristic of R. Petruk's works: from the heritage of Christian Orthodox ritual art and Ukrainian icons of the Baroque period to bold experiments in contemporary secular painting.

O. Osadcha (2020) noted the principle of empathy as important in the creative and pedagogical activities of an artist. The researcher revealed the creative nature of R. Petruk's application of the "metaphysical transmobile" method inherited from M. Storozhenko, which influenced the viewer's subconscious through visual images. The method is used not only in individual practice

but also in the creation of compositions for academic productions. S. Stoian (2020) interpreted the coded meaning of the feerie-tale drama reflected in R. Petruk's composition; emphasised the moral superiority of the heroine Mavka; revealed the meaning of symbolic signs and attributes in the identification of characters; and showed the significance of the pipe in the emergence of the heroes' feelings of love. Indicating the unity of man with the primary elements of nature conveyed in the painting, the researcher defined it as the basis of vital creative energy. Noting the sacred and mystical language of R. Petruk's composition, S. Stoian, along with other researchers, confirmed the role of M. Storozhenko in shaping the creative individuality of talented students.

O. Tarasenko (2018) explored the theme of portrait images of M. Storozhenko and artists-professors of the National Academy of Fine Arts of Ukraine as the elite of the Ukrainian people in the work of a young artist. A. Tarasenko *et al.* (2024) analysed the monumental works of M. Storozhenko, who greatly influenced the students. Thus, the art analysis of the master's student's thesis is within the scope of interest of the authors of this article in the field of contemporary Ukrainian easel and monumental-decorative art. R. Petruk's composition "Forest Song", significant in its idea and figurative-artistic embodiment, requires further study.

The study aimed to interpret the content and identify the peculiarities of the style of R. Petruk's composition "Forest Song" in the context of the heritage of Ukrainian and world monumental, decorative and easel art.

To explore the profound essence and interpret the literary and visual content of Petruk's panel painting, hermeneutics (Heidegger, 2002; 2006) and the theory of the connection between hermeneutics and poetics (Gadamer, 2001) were used. The study was based on texts by E. Betti (2021) to interpret the meaning of the composition. C.G. Jung's analytical psychology determined poetic and artistic creativity (Jung, 1971) and defined the role of symbols and archetypes (Jung, 1968). The comparative method identified and revealed the mythologies of artistic images in Petruk's compositions in the context of world art (Collier, 1993). The method of artistic and stylistic analysis is used for the art analysis of works. The study applied the methods of iconography and iconology developed by E. Panofsky (1955; 1960). Iconography was used to identify the source of the pose of the Mavka figure in R. Petruk's panel painting and determine its connection with traditional Christian art. Contemporary researchers analysed compositional schemes as expressions of a certain meaning. Iconology has taken the interpretation of works of art to a higher level of meaning, found deep connections between art and culture of different eras, and expanded the temporal and spatial boundaries of the work under study. To introduce Petruk's panel painting "The Forest Song" into the context of world culture, a historical and cultural method was used. For the semiotic analysis

of the synthesis of arts revealed in Petruk's visualisation of Lesya Ukrainka's drama-feerie, the research of J. Kristeva (1969), who proposed the concept of "inter-text", was important.

### THE MYTHOPOETICS OF MODERNISM IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE

In the creation of drama-feerie, Lesia Ukrainka (1871-1913) utilised pan-European and national mythopoetry, combining traditional images with personal existential experiences (Ukrainka, 2021). One of the leading artistic qualities of the work is an intimate reflection on the themes of love and death, which for the writer have gained particular depth due to long personal experience of fighting tuberculosis. According to L. Miroshnichenko (2011), this disease not only accompanied throughout life but also took the lives of close people, including Serhiy Merzhynskyi and Klyment Kvitka.

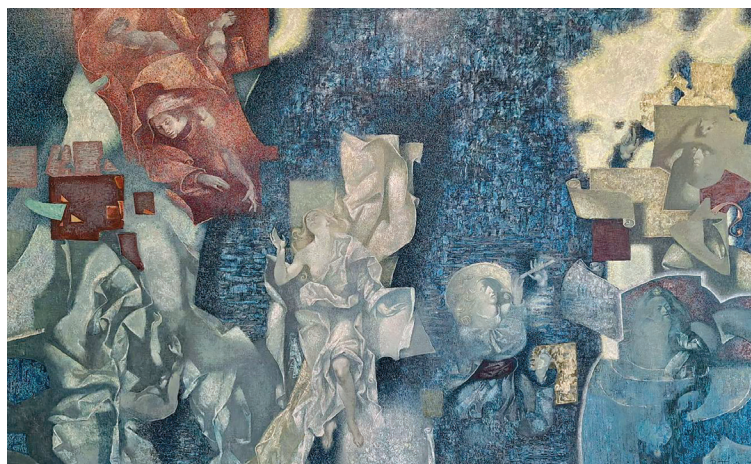
It is symbolic that the birth of Larysa Petrivna Kosach in 1871 coincides with the creation of the programmatic text F. Nietzsche (1872). The philosopher announces the loss and the need to return art to its foundation: "mythical homeland". Nietzsche describes myth as a "concentrated image of the world". Mythology presupposes integrity, since there is no conflict between the phenomenon and the mysterious essence, life and being. Myth has a binary unity of daytime, rational and logical world perception (Apollo) and nighttime, intuitive (Dionysus). The philosopher defined the time as the time of "Dionysian cognition", which is characterised by a "whirlwind of changing images".

Nietzsche was inspired by the mysterious music of Richard Wagner, who significantly influenced the culture of modernism. The aesthetic worldview of the reformist composer is expressed in theoretical texts where the author exclaimed a model of a work of art

of the future, and for a reference to the mythological origins of art (Wagner, 1850). The desire for origins, as one of the fundamental themes of cultural studies, was outlined by R. Wagner and F. Nietzsche and was later addressed by one of the leading cultural critics of the twentieth century, M. Eliade (1971). Mythological thinking, which reflects this aspiration, remains relevant in contemporary art, retaining the ability to form artistic meaning in new contexts.

The crisis-ridden nature of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, as in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, has brought the metaphysical dimension of existence to the fore. In art, attention is focused on the *Axis mundi*: from the expression of the infernal (demonic) principle to the lofty heights of spiritual insight. R. Descartes (2008) explored the relationship between the soul and the body. M. Heidegger (2002; 2006) discussed the turn to the transcendent in the new ontology of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The German metaphysical philosopher argued for the relevance of mythopoetic thinking, which was characteristic of the pre-Socratics. The monograph by V. Sheiko & Y. Bogutsky (2005) addressed the problems of culture and civilisation in the millennium. The cultural and historical metamorphoses of symbolism in European visual art are explored in the monograph by S. Stoian (2014). In mythological themes, literature and visual arts find a second plane, mystery and multidimensionality. Lesya Ukrainka's literary masterpiece "The Forest Song" suggests a departure from the three-dimensional space of everyday life and a connection with the vertical dimension of existence.

The centenary of the drama-feerie (created in 1911) inspired more than just new theatre productions. In the metaphysical panel painting "The Forest Song" (Fig. 1) by Roman Petruk (born 1991), Lesya Ukrainka's play-feerie is presented as an individually interpreted image of a symbolic painting of the present day.



**Figure 1.** Roman Petruk. "Forest Song". 2013-2015

**Note:** Canvas, author's technique. 200×300 cm. Diploma thesis. Workshop of Painting and Temple Culture of the National Academy of Arts and Sciences of Ukraine, Professor Mykola Storozhenko

**Source:** photo by the author of the study

The mythopoetics of modernism as a component of the cultural and philosophical discourse of the twentieth century is manifested in the desire of artists and thinkers to comprehend the primary forms of existence through archetypes, symbols, and myths. In this context, myth is not only a means of artistic modelling of the world but also a way of cognition that removes the contradiction between the physical and the spiritual, the common and the eternal.

### ■ A DIALOGUE BETWEEN GENERATIONS IN THE ARTISTIC TRADITION OF MODERNISM

The master's thesis was created in the studio of painting and temple culture of the National Academy of Arts and Architecture under the guidance of the outstanding Ukrainian artist Mykola Storozhenko (1928-2015). The compilation process lasted for three years (2013-2015). The choice of subject matter is largely due to a biographical factor: the author comes from Lutsk, a region associated with the poetic topography of Volyn, the birthplace of Lesia Ukrainka. This region, denoted by the symbolism of the "Blue Lakes", influenced the formation of artistic worldview and aesthetic guidelines. A general view of the composition evokes associations with the landscape of Ukrainian Polissya viewed from above. Hence the unifying spiritual colour scheme of the canvas. The blue colour of the sky is one of the main colours in canonical church paintings.

Professional culture is based on the interconnection between contemporary artists and their predecessors. R. Petruk received the initial creative development at the art school in Lutsk, studying under L. Manko-Gronska. A graduate of the Art and Graphic Design Department of the Odesa Pedagogical Institute (as of 2 October 1996, South Ukrainian National Pedagogical University named after K.D. Ushynsky), introduced the student to the work of the teacher V. Geghamyan (a student of M. Saryan). During the first years of studies at the National Academy of Arts of Ukraine, Petruk studied under the folk artists of Ukraine V. Barinova-Kuleba and I. Kovtonyuk. In 2018, R. Petruk completed an assistantship internship at NAOMA under the guidance of O. Tsugorka. Thanks to M. Storozhenko, R. Petruk connected with teachers of the master and teachers of the master's teachers: T. Yablonska, S. Grigoriev, F. Krychevsky. Currently, R. Petruk is an Honoured Artist of Ukraine and a professor at the Department of Monumental and Easel Painting at the Mykhailo Boychuk Kyiv State Academy of Decorative Arts and Design.

M. Storozhenko set an example and guided students through life with the power of personality and work. The artist recounts efforts to capture the main features of Storozhenko's school in the painting: a focus on expressing the state of mind in the composition (Tarasenko & Petruk, 2018-2025). In one of the professional articles dedicated to the memory of the teacher, Petruk stated that for the Teacher, visual art was a dialogue

with Eternity. The master was fluent in the language of signs and symbols and taught students to perceive their deeper meaning and create pictorial images with their help (Petruk, 2021). For R. Petruk, it is important that Lesya Ukrainka's literary work itself was written for the theatre. In contrast to the illustrative approach, where the scenes of the fairies unfold sequentially, the artist sought to create a theatrical canvas embodying the mythopoetics of the entire "Forest Song". The artist's goal was not to realistically reflect reality, but to create a picturesque image (Tarasenko & Petruk, 2018-2025). The result was a panel painting that can be transformed into a theatre curtain.

The conventionality of the decorative solution, a high degree of generalisation of artistic images, laconicism, and large size refer to Petruk's painting of the panel as a kind of monumental art. In contrast to monumental painting, which is directly related to architecture, panels are free in nature, both in their creation and use (Mayer, 1969; Clarke, 2010). In this context, it is worth mentioning the study by Y. Lanchak (2023), who, among the images of visual identification of contemporary Ukrainian theatres, addressed the figure of Lesya Ukrainka, emphasising the symbolic role in the visual representation of national theatre culture. An example of a multi-figure composition for musical theatre is G. Semiradsky's curtain for the Lviv Opera House on the theme of Parnassus (1900) (Fig. 2).



**Figure 2.** Heinrich Semiradsky, "Parnassus"

**Note:** A smaller version of the curtain of the Lviv Opera House. 1900. Oil on canvas. 91×47 cm

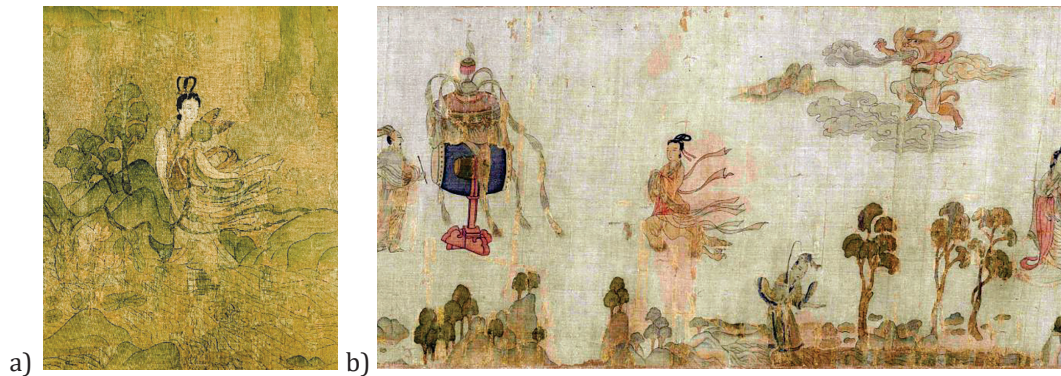
**Source:** Parnassus by H. Siemiradzki... (n.d.)

Storozhenko's workshop trained artists to create monumental and decorative works in a wide range of fields, including theatre. For example, Storozhenko's student and current rector of the National Academy of Arts and Architecture, O. Tsuhorka, is the author of the scenery, decorative panels and costumes for the ballet "The Lord of Borysfen" (2011) for the Taras Shevchenko National Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre; creating a decorative panel for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Academy of Arts and Architecture "Apotheosis of Arts" (2017).

## INTERTEXTUAL PARADIGMS OF EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY LOVE

The theme of earthly and heavenly love is one of the main themes in world art. For instance, it is present in the images of Cupid and Psyche on Greco-Roman sarcophagi, in Titian's allegory "Love of Heaven and Love

of Earth" (1514). A peculiar analogue of the expression of love burning and wildlife presented in Petruk's composition can be seen in the ancient scroll by the Chinese artist Gu Kai-zhi "Feerie of the Lo River" (IV – beginning of V century), as well as its copy (mid-12<sup>th</sup> – mid-13<sup>th</sup> century) (Fig. 3).



**Figure 3.** Gu Kai-zhi, "Feerie of the Lo River"

**Note:** a – Original, Gu Kai-zhi, The Feerie of the Lo River. A scroll on silk. Fragment. IV – beginning V art. Gugong Museum, Beijing; b – Copy of Gu Kaizhi's The Feerie of the Lo River. Fragment. Mid-12<sup>th</sup> – mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, ink and colour on silk, China, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC

**Source:** Gu Kaizhi (n.d.)

The painting is based on a poem by Cao Zhi (192-232), which celebrates the love of a water feerie who was in love with a mortal man. The drama is that the lovers are in different dimensions and have to part ways. C. Laurent (2017) described a sequential narrative of miraculous events that are transcribed on scrolls from the Freer Gallery of Art. The style of Gu Kai-zhi's depiction corresponds to the figurative designation of the culture of "wind and stream" (fengliu). The linear-planar style conveyed the flexible, mobile nature of spiritualised nature on a single conventional tone of silk fabric. The figures of the feerie, with the fantastic accompanying creatures, the prince and retinue, are inscribed in the panorama of the landscape, which is in eternal transformation. Earth, water and sky are actively interacting, which is also characteristic of the image in the panel painting by the Ukrainian artist under study. The commonality is also present in the multidimensional depiction of space, which corresponds to the plot. In the modern composition, as in the ancient Chinese one, the figures are draped, and the faces are conventional. Thus, the most important emotional role is determined by the folds that convey the breath of passionate love.

## THE COMPOSITION STRUCTURE OF THE PIECE "FOREST SONG"

The idea of R. Petruk's panel painting, the antithesis of earthly and heavenly love, is expressed in the structure of the composition. In the triangle of figures in R. Petruk's painting: Mavka, Perelesnyk, and Lukash, natural love as physical passion is contrasted with the spiritual love of people. Mavka, the daughter of the forest, is not

human. A former lover is Perelesnyk. The artist depicted two Mavkas: in human form and the symbolic image of a flute (Tarasenko & Petruk, 2018-2025). The first act of the feerie tale depicts Mavka's dream and awakening. The forest maiden's soul is revived through music. Similar to Orpheus, Lukash brings the soul of the demigoddess out of winter sleep and non-existence. The tragic development of the plot tells of the young man's weakness and betrayal of love, which leads to punishment: Lukash is turned into a wolf. Lukash falls at the feet of the beloved and, forgiven after passionate repentance, becomes human again. Mavka's all-forgiving love frees beloved from animal form, echoing Orpheus. Mavka can be interpreted as a stage image of Lesya Ukrainka. The circle is complete: there is no beginning and no end. The theme of eternal love triumphs.

The pipe, as an image of harmony and peace in the world, is a key symbol in Lesya Ukrainka's feerie, as well as in M. Zhuk's panel "White and Black" (1912-1914), which was created at the same time. The Greek word for the pipe is *surigx*. Ovid describes the transformation of the nymph Hamadryad Sirinca into reeds, from which the suffering lover Pan made a pipe (Soucy, 2023). The pipe is similar to Orpheus' harp, with which the musician convinced Hades and Persephone to release Eurydice from the realm of the dead. The victor over death descends into hell to overcome the chaos of death with harmony. M. Storozhenko returns to the theme of music in a series of images entitled "Orpheus and Eurydice" (1992-1993); the illustration for P. Mirny's book "Among the Steppes" (1980) depicts children playing pipes.

In the composition “Forest Song”, R. Petruk depicted not all the participants in the fairytale, but only those worthy, according to the artist (Tarasenko & Petruk, 2018-2025). In the blue sky reflected in the lakes of Polissya, there is no place for the greedy mother Lukash and the wife Kilyna, who sold the ancient oak tree (the tree of life) and, thereby, violated the unity of spirit and matter, man and nature, and broke the family ties of the living with the generations of their ancestors. In the central part of the canvas are images of Mavka floating in the air and Lukash kneeling with a pipe. According to the artist’s idea, the young man’s foot, depicted in a complex perspective, is a symbol of the contradictory path of life. The ascending vertical form in which the figure of Mavka is inscribed is characteristic of Christian art depicting the theme of ascension. Fire can be interpreted as the liberation of the soul. C.G. Jung noted that in Heraclitus, the highest degree of the soul is fiery and dry (Jung, 1968). The pipe in the hands of Orpheus-Lukas is a magic wand, the key to knowledge of the symbolic drama-fairytale. With the help of music, matter is transformed, passing from the dense physical plane to the subtle plane of existence. Lukas’s straw hat evokes associations with a halo. Mavka turns into a pipe. A mythologem is born, a poetic metaphor of the pipe-Mavka: “Play, play! Give voice to my heart. It is all I have left” (Finale) (Ukrainka, 2021).

The side elements of the composition show personified embodiments of the elements: fire (Perelesnyk at the top left), and water (Rusalka, Vodyanik at the bottom left and right). The forest, which connects the earth and the sky through the world tree, is marked by a fragment of a wide trunk with a glowing golden crown cloud and the head of Lesovik in a shaggy cap made of marten fur. Lesovik’s gaze directs the viewer’s attention to Perelesnyk, uniting the characters. The basis for the image of Uncle Lion, the spiritual guardian of the connection between earth and sky for Roman Petruk, is M. Storozhenko, whom students called “the guardian of truth”. The lion, depicted as a sign of the solar zodiac, is located between Lesovik and Vodianik.

The descending Perelesnyk is connected by a compositional triangle with the mermaid who is in love and the nymph who was once loved. The seducer’s gaze is directed at the water nymph, and the hand extends towards Mavka, but cannot touch because Mavka seeks human love, not the love of a natural element. The figure of the Mermaid playing in the water is not immediately recognisable in the lower part of the vertical composition. The girl’s arms are extended towards the beloved. The water nymph is immersed in the centre of a unique bouquet of wave folds. The element of water is located between the earth and the air. A body immersed in water loses its normal weight. According to Jung’s analytical psychology, water is a symbol of the unconscious; water is the spirit that has become natural (Jung, 1968). In the Chinese yin-yang system, water symbolises birth

and death, the beginning and end of the cycle of existence. In the lower right part of the composition, the Water Sprite is depicted with a “yellow jug” on the head and a sunflower of the Volyn water lily. The contemplative mood of the water spirits evokes allusions to the image of Bodhisattvas on a double lotus bowl pointing in different directions. The compositional and plastic solution of the work “Forest Song” is related to the character of the multi-tiered iconostasis of a Catholic church (for example, the altar of the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Buchach (1763) (Fig. 4).

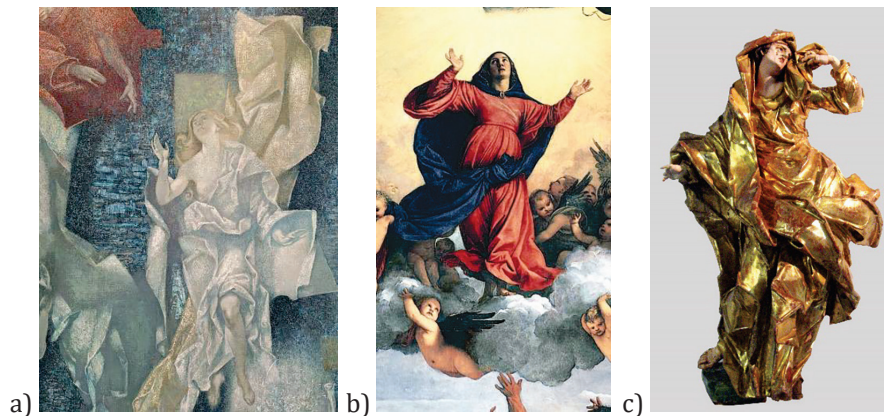


**Figure 4.** Altar of the Roman Catholic Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Buchach, Ternopil Region

**Source:** Buchach (n.d.)

In M. Storozhenko’s workshop, students were taught to perceive iconostasis as a holistic, multifaceted spiritual image that exists in synthesis with architecture. Icon painting is directly related to symbolism (Stoian, 2014). Along with paintings, R. Petruk creates icons in which the spiritual plane is paramount (Petruk, 2020). Training tasks involving the multi-figure composition of the iconostasis, which is a portal from the sensory world to the supersensory, are reflected in the artist’s secular compositions, in particular, “Forest Song”. The composition of “Forest Song” has a three-part structure, marked by concentrated spatial pauses between the characters. The characters are inscribed in rhythmically organised decorative layers. The plastic solution is linked to monumental sculptural relief.

Authors of art dictionaries indicate that panels are used not only in wall decorations but also in altar compositions (Mayer, 1969; Clarke, 2010). This connection is important for the iconography of the image of Mavka, whose figure is directed upwards, similar to the image of the Virgin Mary in compositions of the Ascension (Fig. 5). Iconography traced the characteristic features of the image of Mavka in Petruk’s panel painting and determine its connection with traditional Christian art (the theme of the Ascension).



**Figure 5.** The iconography of Mavka

**Note:** a – Roman Petruk. Mavka. Fragment of the composition “Forest Song”. 2013-2015; b – Titian. The Assumption of the Virgin Mary (Assunta). Fragment. 1518. Wood and oil on canvas. Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice; c – John Georg Pinsel. The Virgin Mary. Late 1750s. Linden wood, polychrome, levkas, gilding. Church in Godowice. Lviv National Gallery of Art named after B. D. Voznytskyi

**Source:** figure 5a courtesy of Roman Petruk, Assumption of the Virgin (Titian) (n.d.), Grand&Great (n.d.)

The composition lacks the usual straight perspective with a horizon line. The human space is not limited to the physical body. An example of this is the literary works of Lesya Ukrainka, the feerie on the connection between the human world and the universe. The artist is inspired by the art of European and Ukrainian Baroque, with its inherent multi-vector range. Petruk rejects the three-dimensional realistic depiction of the landscape. Anthropomorphic personalities of the spirits of natural elements, endowed with symbolic attributes, are created by the imagination. This demonstrated a connection with the root system of Slavic pantheism. At the same time, nature is spiritualised by Lukash's music and Mavka's forgiving love. There is a synthesis of pagan and Christian cultures. The characters float in a conventional space filled with energy. Abstract geometric shapes exacerbate the dynamics of organic forms inherent in nature (for instance, the square – symbolises the earth).

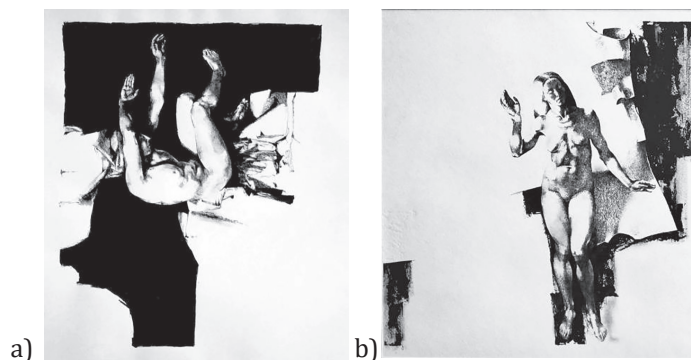
The physical space of the real world is “irrelevant” to R. Petruk's creativity; what is important is the “energy of the plane”. According to the artist, everything is united by “One who sits in the rock”, “One who breaks the dams”, and the all-encompassing energy of wind and ether (Tarasenko & Petruk, 2018-2025). Air transforms the dynamics of folds and creates emotional tension. Creating a holistic space on the canvas, Petruk combines the elements of air and water, emphasising water as the basis of existence. The composition is united by the space of the emerald blue-green background. The cold tones, in which the artist often paints faces, correspond to the dominant spirit. The multi-layered texture, created by numerous brush and palette knife strokes, conveys the micro-vibrations that Roman felt in the forest atmosphere while painting en plein air. The trembling of the leaves in the gusts of wind finds a form of expression akin to pointillism and divisionism.

## THE ARTISTIC METHOD OF MYKOLA STOROZHENKO'S SCHOOL

R. Petruk mentioned that Storozhenko's academic productions are based on a metaphysical approach to material form (figures, drapery) (Petruk, 2020). Storozhenko's method was described by R. Petruk (2020) and presented in educational productions. The academic education system can freely express the plasticity of the human body. To find a clear image of the figure, artists drew it from complex angles (Fig. 6). For each figure in the composition “Forest Song”, a detailed drawing of a naked body was created. For the drawing of the complex perspective of Perelesnyk, more than ten models posed for the artist. In the next stage, the figures were dressed in dynamic folds of different characters, designed to express the emotional state of the characters.

In the dynamic process of finding a compositional solution, many sketches were created (Fig. 7). The method of gluing new sheets of paper onto thick paper in correct places was used. At this stage, the sketch resembles an abstract composition, as the goal is to expressively solve large colour and tonal relationships and rhythm (Petruk, 2020).

M. Storozhenko shared with talented students the ideological scope of creativity and the language of visual arts that was developed over many decades. The master's artistic form absorbs the energy of different cultures (Storozhenko, 2008). The expression of R. Petruk's composition is based on multidirectional vectors of figures: Perelesnyk descending to the ground and Mavka ascending to the sky. The “entrance” into the metaphysical space of the canvas occurs from the top left to the bottom. The fiery energy of the sky bursts into the blue green of the lake Polissya-Volyn with the burning folds of Perelesnyk's clothes (Prelessnik, the demon Eros): “like fire itself” (Fig. 8).



**Figure 6.** Training performances in Storozhenko's studio. 2014

**Note:** a – Roman Petruk. “Mermaid”. Drawing for the composition “Forest Song”, b – Roman Petruk. “Mavka”. Drawing for the composition “Forest Song”

**Source:** provided by Roman Petruk



**Figure 7.** Roman Petruk. “Forest Song”. 2013-2015. Sketch

**Source:** provided by Roman Petruk



**Figure 8.** Roman Petruk. Perelesnik. “Forest Song”.  
Fragment. 2013-2015

**Source:** provided by Roman Petruk

The role is similar to the Zephyr in Sandro Botticelli's *Primavera* (1482) (Fig. 9), which represents the symbolic unity of earth and sky. In the quattrocento masterpiece, a winged blue-and-blue figure of air spirit spiritualises Chloride, after which the nymph

transforms into the goddess of flowers Flora, and the revived earth blooms. During a creative trip in 2014, Roman studied the art of Italy. The author perceived Botticelli's paintings as “too corporeal” to convey flight.



**Figure 9.** Sandro Botticelli, *Primavera*, 1482

**Note:** Wood, tempera. 203×314. Florence, Uffizi Gallery  
**Source:** *Primavera* by Sandro Botticelli (n.d.)

The element of the fiery nature of Perelesnik's passion has an analogue in the image of Cupid. For example, in Botticelli's painting *Primavera*, the formidable pagan god is depicted shooting a flaming arrow at young maidens. In the dynamics of the Perelesnyk, allusions to the expression of the mythological idea of the unity of earth and sky are present in Tintoretto's painting *The Origin of the Milky Way* (1575) (Fig. 10).



**Figure 10.** Jacopo Tintoretto, "The Origin of the Milky Way", 1575

**Note:** Oil on canvas, 149.4 × 168, National Gallery, London

**Source:** J. Tintoretto (n.d.)

In contrast, in Caravaggio's composition "The Seven Works of Mercy" (1607), angels descending from heaven visibly connect the earth and the sky with the movement of their hands and the sweep of their enormous wings (Fig. 11). The spatial silhouette of the wings evokes an allusion to an hourglass. Visitors to the temple, along with the characters depicted in the painting, witness the descent of heavenly forces to Earth. Depicted above the messengers of heaven, the Virgin Mary with the Infant Jesus gazes upon the good deeds of people. The power of the earth is affirmed in the voluminous and plastic modelling of athletic bodies, in the concreteness of the drapery of clothing, and the warm tones of the night. In contrast to the earthly character of the altar image of the reformer of European art of the Baroque era, in Petruk's composition, following the idea of the triumph of love and the descent of Mavka, the element of the sky prevails.

Creating a symbolic space, the artist refuses to depict the earth. R. Petruk's departure from gravity evokes allusions to the plafond paintings of the Baroque monumental and decorative art. For example, M. Caravaggio's *Jupiter, Neptune and Pluto* (1597) (Fig. 12).

Similarly to M. Storozhenko, R. Petruk is influenced by the emotionality of Baroque art. Similar to theatre actors, the characters in the paintings are endowed with expressive gestures. Only faces and limbs are visible in the figures, and an expressive rhythm of folds prevails. The folds, which are unique to each character, convey emotions, while at the same time being interconnected and creating an overall dynamic relief. M. Storozhenko

was fascinated by the plasticity of I.G. Pinzel. The winds and time have not spared most of the sculptures of the master, but even deprived of colour, they impress with the primary depth of the material (Fig. 13).



**Figure 11.** Caravaggio, "The Seven Works of Mercy", 1607

**Note:** 390×260, Pio Monte della Miserecordia, Naples

**Source:** M. Caravaggio (n.d.)



**Figure 12.** Caravaggio, Jupiter, Neptune and Pluto, 1597

**Note:** 300×180. Painting of the ceiling in Villa Boncompagni Ludovisi, Rome

**Source:** Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto by Caravaggio (n.d.)



**Figure 13.** Johann Georg Pinsel, "Angel", 1750s

**Note:** Tree, Museum of Sacred Baroque Sculpture I.G. Pinsel, Lviv

**Source:** Photo by Olga Tarasenko

R. Petruk noted that M. Storozhenko resembled the folds on the human figure to flowers on the “body” of a blossoming cherry tree, believing that it was necessary to convey not the dense fabric of the folds, but to express the invisible ether between them (Petruk, 2020). At the celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NAO-MA (December 2017), R. Petruk’s composition “Forest Song” was exhibited in the assembly hall opposite M. Storozhenko’s monumental canvas “Premonition of Golgotha” (2015). A symbolic meeting of generations took place, continuing the life of the teacher in the student. On 25 February 2018, an exhibition of Petruk’s panel paintings opened at the Lesya Ukrainka Public Library in Kyiv. The artistic method of Mykola Storozhenko’s school, based on a synthesis of deep philosophical understanding, rich cultural heritage and expressive plasticity, found its continuation in the work of Roman Petruk. Through dynamic composition, ambiguous allusions to European and Eastern art, and emotional language of gesture and drapery, the artists affirm spiritual values and universal themes of love, suffering and transformation.

## CONCLUSIONS

The mythopoetics of Lesya Ukrainka’s drama-ferie was noted to be vital for the crisis of the late XX – and early XXI centuries, given the range of experiences of love and death, human attitude to nature, and perception of nature as a holistic living principle. The text of the feerie continues to inspire artists as a basis for personal interpretation. The analysis of the literature demonstrated that R. Petruk’s composition “Forest Song”, significant in its ideological content and artistic form, remains understudied. A range of methods (hermeneutics, analytical psychology, comparative studies, iconography and iconology) interpreted the contemporary work in an art historical manner, including it in the context of the art of the West and the East in a wide time range. Created under the guidance of M. Storozhenko, the large-scale composition by R. Petruk is suggestive in terms of the emotions and philosophical perception of

the feerie. The painting testified to the artist’s ability to perceive the dramatic essence of Lesya Ukrainka’s poetic images living on the verge of the physical and ideal world; to convey time, which combines the past and the present. R. Petruk abandoned the realistic depiction of the forest, creating conventional mythopoetic images of various elements. Following the idea of drama, the composition is painted with the dominant spiritual vertical. The idea of the work is related to the eternal theme: love brings harmony to the world through music.

The composition by R. Petruk is defined as a panel painting. The geometric schemes of the “pictorial fabric” reveal techniques inherent in monumental and decorative art. They contributed to the achievement of laconic expressiveness. The character of the multi-figure canvas evoked allusions to the theatrical curtain and the role it could play. The structure of the panel painting is in tune with the Catholic iconostasis. At the same time, the monumental and decorative basis suggests the possibility of transformation into a sculptural relief. In the polystylism of M. Storozhenko’s school, the heritage of Neo-Baroque, in which the master saw the embodiment of the national style of Ukraine, was central. The feerie-panel transferred the viewer out of everyday life and into the planes of existence. In the language of monumental and decorative art, the real three-dimensional space is transformed into a spiritual transcendental dimension. Prospects for further research on the chosen topic are based on the publication of the article “The Image of Lesya Ukrainka in Visual Art”.

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## Інтерпретація драми-феєрії Лесі Українки в картині-панно Р. Петрука «Лісова пісня». Школа М. Стороженка

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**Анотація.** Мета роботи полягала в розкритті індивідуального трактування драми-феєрії Лесі Українки в картині-панно Р. Петрука «Лісова пісня». У статті використовувалися герменевтичний, компаративний, іконографічний, іконологічний, історико-культурологічний методи. Проаналізовано відношення змісту драми з міфопоетикою живописного образу. Картину-панно досліджено у взаємозв'язку з темою земної і небесної любові у світовому мистецтві. Розглянуто характер персоніфікації образів природних стихій; умовність живописного та просторового рішення; показано роль атрибутів у створенні художніх образів. Досліджено значення спадщини українського бароко та світового монументально-декоративного і станкового образотворчого мистецтва у створенні особистої стилістики твору. Проаналізовано композиційне та пластичне вирішення полотна. Творчий метод Р. Петрука вивчено в контексті школи М. Стороженка та Національної академії образотворчого мистецтва і архітектури. Розкрито взаємозв'язок метафізичного характеру картини-панно Р. Петрука «Лісова пісня» з природою Волині. Показано новаторський підхід художника до створення синтетичного образу драми-феєрії візуальними засобами. Висвітлено індивідуальний характер сприйняття і трактування літературного твору. Виявлено традиції національного та світового мистецтва, на які спирається художник. Показано ключову роль сопілки в символіці картини-панно; визначено провідну роль музики в гармонії світобудови. Виявлено глибинний взаємозв'язок образів Лукаша, Мавки, Лесі Українки з міфологічним героєм Орфеєм. Простежено спільні риси картини-панно Р. Петрука з театральною завісою та бароковим іконостасом. Акцентовано, що особливістю композиції Р. Петрука є монументально-декоративний лад. Стаття може бути корисною для викладачів та студентів закладів освіти мистецького спрямування, зокрема, в лекційних курсах з історії української художньої та музичної культури; для художників, культурологів та мистецтвознавців у створенні історії сучасного монументально-декоративного мистецтва

**Ключові слова:** міфопоетичний образ; синтез мистецтв; музика; символізм; творчий метод; інтертекст; Захід та Схід