

The musical-creative and pedagogical activity of Solomiya Krushelnytska: contribution to the development of Ukrainian music education

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Abstract. This article examines the musical-creative and pedagogical activity of the prominent Ukrainian opera singer Solomiya Krushelnytska (1872-1952) and her contribution to developing Ukrainian music education in the first half of the 20th century. Utilising theoretical approaches to studying personality within the cultural-historical context, we explore Krushelnytska's life path as an example of combining artistic activity and pedagogical practice. The research analyses biographical materials, students' memoirs, and critical reviews of the singer's performances. The results show that Krushelnytska significantly contributed to popularising Ukrainian vocal art internationally and played an essential role in developing vocal pedagogy in Ukraine. Her pedagogical principles, grounded in her personal experience and methods of the Italian vocal school, promoted the formation of new generations of Ukrainian opera performers.

Keywords: Solomiya Krushelnytska, Ukrainian music education, vocal pedagogy, opera performance, cultural-historical context, artistic activity, pedagogical principles, Italian vocal school

1. Introduction

The study of prominent cultural figures and their influence on the development of various spheres of art and education is increasingly relevant in modern humanities research. The life and work of outstanding individuals often provide valuable insights into the socio-cultural processes of their time and help trace the evolution of artistic traditions and pedagogical practices.

Solomiya Krushelnytska (also known as Salomea Kruscelnitska, Salomea Krusceniski, Sołomija Kruszelnyćka), a renowned Ukrainian opera singer of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, is a remarkable example of a multifaceted personality who made significant contributions to both the performing arts and music education. Her artistic achievements and pedagogical endeavours left an indelible mark on the development of the Ukrainian vocal school and the formation of national cultural identity.

Despite the growing interest in Krushelnytska's legacy among scholars and the general public, comprehensive studies still need to be conducted that provide an in-depth analysis of her pedagogical activity and its impact on the development of music education in Ukraine. This article aims to fill this gap by examining Krushelnytska's creative path and teaching practice within the broader cultural-historical context of her era.

2. Literature review

The life and artistic career of Solomiya Krushelnytska has been the subject of numerous biographical and musicological studies. The most comprehensive account of the singer's life and achievements is provided in the monograph by Koliada [7], which

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Educational
Dimension



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offers a detailed chronicle of her creative journey and personal life, supplemented by extensive archival materials and contemporary reviews.

Several collections of articles and memoirs [12, 14] shed light on various aspects of Krushelnytska's artistry, featuring valuable insights from her colleagues, students, and critics. These works provide a vivid picture of the singer's personality, her dedication to her craft, and her impact on the cultural life of her time. The pedagogical heritage of Solomiya Krushelnytska is examined in the dissertation of Komarevych [8], which explores her educational principles and methods in the context of the development of Ukrainian vocal pedagogy in the first half of the 20th century.

However, despite these valuable contributions, there is still a need for a more focused and in-depth examination of Krushelnytska's teaching philosophy and practice, as well as their influence on the development of music education in Ukraine. This article seeks to address this gap by synthesising the available biographical, musicological, and pedagogical sources, as well as drawing on the theoretical frameworks of cultural-historical psychology and personality studies, to provide a comprehensive analysis of Krushelnytska's contribution to Ukrainian music education. Furthermore, it aims to situate her pedagogical activity within the broader context of the musical-educational work of other prominent Ukrainian composers and performers of the late 19th – early 20th centuries, such as Mykola Lysenko, Yakiv Stepovy, Stanislav Liudkevych, Filaret Kolessa, and others, as explored in the studies by Mykhailychenko [10] and Frait [6].

3. Methods

The research employs a qualitative approach, combining historical, biographical, and cultural analysis methods to examine Solomiya Krushelnytska's life and work within the socio-cultural context of her time. The primary sources include biographical materials [2], memoirs of Krushelnytska's contemporaries and students, critical reviews of her performances, and the singer's personal correspondence.

The theoretical framework of the study draws on the cultural-historical theory of personality development, as elaborated by Vygotsky [13], which emphasises the role of social interactions and cultural tools in shaping individual consciousness and creative activity. Additionally, the research employs Bakhtin and Gratchev's [1] concept of dialogism to explore the interplay between Krushelnytska's artistic identity and the cultural discourses of her era.

The methods of biographical analysis and narrative inquiry are used to reconstruct Krushelnytska's life story and to identify the key events, influences, and turning points that shaped her creative and pedagogical trajectory. The analysis of historical documents and archival materials helps to situate the singer's activity within the broader context of the Ukrainian cultural renaissance of the early 20th century and to trace its impact on the subsequent development of music education in the country.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. The formation of Krushelnytska's artistic identity

The cultural and intellectual ferment of late 19th-century Galicia deeply influenced Solomiya Krushelnytska's early life and education. This region served as a major centre of the Ukrainian national revival. Born into a family of Greek Catholic clergy in the town of Biliavynsi, Krushelnytska was exposed to the rich musical traditions of the Ukrainian church and folk music from a young age [7]. Her father, Amvrosii Krushelnytskyi (Ambroży Kruszelnicki), was a well-educated man who played the violin and piano and had a passion for literature, while her mother, Teodora Maria, was known for her beautiful singing voice and her knowledge of Ukrainian folk songs [7].

Krushelnytska's formal music education began at the age of nine when she started taking piano lessons from local teachers. In 1883, she entered the Lviv Conservatory, where she studied piano and voice under the guidance of the renowned Polish pedagogue Walery Wysocki. It was during this period that Krushelnytska developed her distinctive vocal technique, combining the bel canto tradition of the Italian school with the expressive depth and dramatic intensity of the Slavic operatic style [7].

Krushelnytska's artistic formation was further shaped by her encounters with the leading cultural figures of her time. She was particularly influenced by her friendship with the Ukrainian writer and scholar Ivan Franko, who introduced her to the works of Taras Shevchenko and other Ukrainian literary classics. Franko's passionate advocacy of Ukrainian culture and his belief in the transformative power of art had a profound impact on Krushelnytska's own artistic vision and sense of national identity [12].

Another significant influence on Krushelnytska's development as an artist was her collaboration with the Ukrainian composer Mykola Lysenko. Lysenko's works, steeped in the folk music traditions of Ukraine, resonated deeply with Krushelnytska's artistic sensibilities. She became one of the foremost interpreters of Lysenko's songs and operatic roles, and her performances played a crucial role in popularising his music both in Ukraine and abroad [14].

4.2. Krushelnytska's rise to international fame

Krushelnytska's international career took off in the late 1890s when she was invited to perform at the Lviv Opera. Her debut in the role of Leonora in Verdi's "Il Trovatore" was a resounding success, and she quickly became a leading soprano of the Lviv Opera Company. In 1898, Krushelnytska made her first appearance at the Paris Opera, where she impressed audiences and critics alike with her powerful voice and dramatic intensity [7].

Over the next decade, Krushelnytska established herself as one of the most sought-after sopranos in Europe, performing at major opera houses in Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Russia. She was particularly acclaimed for her interpretations of the leading roles in operas by Verdi, Puccini, and Wagner, which showcased her exceptional vocal range, technical precision, and emotional depth [12].

One of the highlights of Krushelnytska's career was her participation in the 1904 premiere of Puccini's "Madama Butterfly" at the Teatro Grande in Brescia, Italy (figure 1). Critics and audiences widely praised Krushelnytska's portrayal of the title role, and her performance was seen as instrumental in securing the opera's place in the standard repertoire [7]. Puccini himself acknowledged Krushelnytska's contribution to the success of the opera, calling her his "true collaborator" [14].

Throughout her international career, Krushelnytska remained deeply committed to promoting Ukrainian music and culture. She frequently included Ukrainian folk songs and works by Ukrainian composers in her concert programs, and she used her fame and influence to raise awareness of Ukrainian culture among Western audiences. In 1920, Krushelnytska organised a series of concerts in major European cities to benefit the Ukrainian independence movement, which was then fighting against Bolshevik aggression [12].

4.3. Krushelnytska's pedagogical work at the Lviv Conservatory

In August 1939, after her husband's death, Krushelnytska came to visit her relatives in Galicia with two suitcases. However, due to the outbreak of World War II, she never returned home to Italy. During the German occupation, she tried to survive by giving private vocal lessons [11].

In late 1944, the director of the Lviv Conservatory, Vasyl Barvinsky, invited Solomiya Krushelnytska to the position of professor of solo singing (figure 2), where she would



Figure 1: Solomiya Krushelnytska as Cio-Cio-San (Madama Butterfly), 1904 [14].

remain for the rest of her life [7]. Her decision to dedicate herself to pedagogy was motivated by a deep sense of responsibility to her native land and a desire to pass on her knowledge and experience to the younger generation of Ukrainian singers [5].

Krushelnytska's teaching philosophy was grounded in the principles of the Italian vocal school, which she had mastered during her studies in Italy. She emphasised the importance of natural, unforced sound production, clear diction, and emotional expressiveness in singing. At the same time, she adapted these principles to the specific needs and characteristics of the Ukrainian vocal repertoire, paying close attention to the nuances of the Ukrainian language and the distinctive melodic and rhythmic patterns of Ukrainian folk music [12].

One of the key aspects of Krushelnytska's teaching philosophy was her emphasis on the holistic development of the singer's personality. She believed that a great artist must possess not only technical mastery but also a rich inner life, a strong sense of purpose, and a deep connection to their cultural heritage. Krushelnytska encouraged her students to read widely, attend concerts and theatre performances, and engage with the intellectual and artistic currents of their time [14].

In her teaching practice, Krushelnytska was known for her exacting standards and her unwavering commitment to excellence. She demanded the utmost discipline and dedication from her students, and she was unsparing in her criticism of their mistakes and shortcomings. At the same time, she was deeply invested in their personal and artistic growth, and she worked tirelessly to help them overcome their limitations and realise their full potential [7].

Krushelnytska's pedagogical methods were based on the empirical approach common in the Italian vocal school. She rarely engaged in extensive theoretical explanations, preferring instead to demonstrate proper singing technique through her voice. She would often sing phrases or entire songs to her students, sometimes imitating their mistakes to highlight areas for improvement. This approach was highly effective, as it allowed young singers to hear and internalise the correct sound production without relying solely on verbal instructions [3].



Figure 2: Solomiya Krushelnytska with professors of the Lviv Conservatory, 1947 [9].

Another important aspect of Krushelnytska's teaching was her emphasis on the development of musical expressiveness and interpretive skills. She stressed the importance of understanding the emotional content of each phrase and word and of conveying this understanding through the voice. Krushelnytska encouraged her students to find their own unique interpretations of the works they studied rather than simply imitating her or other famous singers [3].

Krushelnytska's pedagogical legacy at the Lviv Conservatory was profound and far-reaching. Throughout her more than two decades of teaching, she trained several generations of outstanding Ukrainian singers, many of whom went on to achieve international recognition in their own right. Among her most famous students were Ira Malaniuk, Helena Zboinos-Borkevich, and Andriy Dobriansky, all of whom credited Krushelnytska with playing a decisive role in their artistic development [5].

Beyond her direct impact on individual students, Krushelnytska's work at the Lviv Conservatory helped to establish the institution as a leading centre of vocal pedagogy in Ukraine and beyond. Her innovative teaching methods, her rigorous standards, and her commitment to the preservation and development of Ukrainian musical culture set a new benchmark for excellence in music education, and her influence can still be felt in the work of contemporary Ukrainian vocal pedagogues [12].

4.4. Krushelnytska's contributions to Ukrainian culture

Solomiya Krushelnytska's significance for Ukrainian culture extends far beyond her achievements as a singer and a pedagogue. Throughout her life, she was a tireless advocate for Ukrainian music, language, and identity, and her work played a crucial role in shaping the cultural landscape of her nation.

One of Krushelnytska's most important contributions was her role in popularising Ukrainian folk music both in Ukraine and abroad. From the very beginning of her

career, she made a point of including Ukrainian folk songs in her concert programs, often performing them alongside works by classical composers. Her renditions of songs like “Oi ne khody, Hrytsiu” and “Oi ty, divchyno, z horikha zernia” were celebrated for their emotional depth and authenticity, and they helped to establish Ukrainian folk music as a legitimate and valued part of the European cultural canon [14].

Krushelnytska was also a champion of Ukrainian classical music, and she worked closely with many of the leading Ukrainian composers of her time. In addition to her collaborations with Mykola Lysenko, she was a frequent performer of works by Kyrylo Stetsenko, Vasyl Barvinsky, and other prominent figures of the Ukrainian musical renaissance. Her performances of their works, both in Ukraine and on the international stage, helped to raise the profile of Ukrainian classical music and to assert its place in the broader context of European musical culture [12].

Beyond her musical activities, Krushelnytska was a prominent figure in the Ukrainian national movement of the early 20th century. She was a close friend and collaborator of many leading Ukrainian intellectuals and artists, including Ivan Franko, Mykhailo Hrushevsky, and Solomiya Pavlychko, and she used her influence and resources to support Ukrainian cultural and educational institutions. In 1939, she donated a significant portion of her personal fortune to the creation of the Lviv Opera Theater, which remains one of the most important cultural landmarks of western Ukraine [7].

Solomiya Krushelnytska gave her last concert in Lviv at the age of 77. With a voice that was still pure but not as strong, she sang “Rodymyi Kraiu” in the Lviv Philharmonic. However, she remained connected to music until the end of her life. Even when she had throat cancer at the age of 79 (from April 8 to 16, 1951), Krushelnytska recorded four works, which were arrangements of Ukrainian songs by Andriy Shtoharenko, Stanislav Lyudkevych, Boris Lyatoshynsky, and Viktor Matyuk [11].

Krushelnytska’s legacy as a cultural icon and a symbol of Ukrainian national identity has only grown in the decades since her death. Today, she is widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in the history of Ukrainian music, and her life and work continue to inspire new generations of Ukrainian artists and intellectuals. The Solomiya Krushelnytska Museum in Lviv, which houses a rich collection of the singer’s personal belongings, manuscripts, and photographs, has become an important centre of cultural memory and a pilgrimage site for music lovers from around the world [5]. Another memorial museum dedicated to Solomiya Krushelnytska is in the village of Bila in the Ternopil region. Streets in Kyiv, Lviv, Ternopil, Rivne, Zhytomyr, and Buchach are named in her honour. In the grand hall of La Scala, among the portraits of talented Italians Roger Leoncavallo and Enrico Caruso, there is a relief sculpture of the great Ukrainian Solomiya Krushelnytska [11].

Solomiya Krushelnytska’s contributions to Ukrainian music education and culture are difficult to overstate. As a singer, she achieved international fame and recognition, and her performances helped to put Ukrainian music on the world map. As a pedagogue, she trained several generations of outstanding Ukrainian singers and helped to establish the Lviv Conservatory as a leading centre of vocal education. As a cultural figure, she played a crucial role in shaping the identity and aspirations of the Ukrainian nation, and her legacy continues to inspire and guide Ukrainian artists and intellectuals to this day.

5. Conclusion

Solomiya Krushelnytska’s musical-creative and pedagogical activity represents a unique synthesis of artistic excellence, cultural leadership, and educational innovation. Through her outstanding performances on the international opera stage, Krushelnytska challenged stereotypes about Ukrainian art and asserted the viability and

originality of the Ukrainian cultural tradition.

As a pedagogue, Krushelnytska made a lasting contribution to the development of Ukrainian music education by adapting the best practices of the European vocal schools to the specific needs and characteristics of Ukrainian culture. Her holistic approach to the training of singers, emphasising the unity of technical mastery and artistic expression, set a new standard for vocal pedagogy in Ukraine and influenced the work of several generations of music educators.

Krushelnytska's legacy extends beyond the realm of music and education. Her life and work epitomise the cultural and national aspirations of the Ukrainian people in the early 20th century. By forging a successful international career and using her fame to promote Ukrainian culture, Krushelnytska demonstrated the potential of the arts to assert national identity and to build bridges between cultures.

Today, as Ukraine continues to navigate the challenges of cultural and educational development in the globalised world, Solomiya Krushelnytska's example remains as relevant as ever. Her unwavering commitment to artistic excellence, her deep respect for the national cultural heritage, and her openness to the best achievements of world culture can serve as a guiding light for the new generations of Ukrainian artists and educators.

5.1. Future research directions

While this article provides a comprehensive overview of Solomiya Krushelnytska's musical-creative and pedagogical activities, several areas merit further research and exploration.

One potential direction is a more detailed examination of Krushelnytska's teaching methods and their specific applications in the context of Ukrainian vocal pedagogy. Comparing her approach with those of other prominent vocal teachers of her time could yield valuable insights into the evolution of vocal pedagogy in Ukraine and beyond.

Another fruitful avenue of research could be the study of Krushelnytska's influence on the development of Ukrainian opera and concert repertoire. A systematic analysis of her concert programs and recordings could shed light on her role in popularising Ukrainian music and establishing its place in the international canon.

Finally, there is a need for more interdisciplinary studies that would situate Krushelnytska's activity within the broader cultural, social, and political contexts of her time. Such studies could explore the intersections between Krushelnytska's artistic career and the major intellectual and artistic currents of the early 20th century, such as modernism, nationalism, and feminism.

By pursuing these and other lines of inquiry, scholars can deepen our understanding of Solomiya Krushelnytska's multifaceted legacy and its enduring significance for Ukrainian culture and education. At the same time, such research can contribute to the broader field of cultural studies by illuminating the complex interplay between individual creativity, cultural tradition, and social change.

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