

UDC 7.071.1 (092) (477.53)

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SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PORTRAIT OF POLTAVA IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY IN MEMOIRS OF LEONID LISSOWSKY

The little-known memoirs of the composer Leonid Lisovsky (1866-1934) dedicated to one of the most striking periods of his life and activity in Poltava in the early twentieth century, are analyzed. The memoirs recreate the atmosphere of old Poltava and the way of life of its inhabitants; personal, professional and public relations of L. Lisovsky are revealed. The psychological portrait of the author and his entourage is presented.

Key words: *socio-cultural portrait, Poltava province, Leonid Lisovsky, memories, musical environment.*

The statement of a problem. Modern humanities demonstrate a growing interest to studies of everyday life. The studies increasingly focus on provincial (including urban) culture of the past and present; exploring the processes of interaction between the capital and the provinces and examining the peculiarities of the way of life, leisure and every day routines of various layers of urban society. It is therefore important to explore and scrutinize in more detail, the category "a way of life". From the philosophy's point of view, a way of life is defined as «an entirety, having a cultural meaning, and conditioned by a human being's ability to act productively» (E. Orlova); «a product of social and individual relationship», «a manifestator of mentality» [1]. In the cultural studies, it is viewed as a dynamic social and cultural «portrait» of members of a society, represented through the processes of their life activity under certain conditions of being. The meaning of the concept is revealed in representation of how people live and work, what types of activities and interpersonal interactions fill their lives [2].

The richest material for the research of the social and cultural aspects of everyday life is offered by personal data sources (e. g., epistles, diaries, memoirs, autobiographies, notes, essays, etc.) which, in comparison with official documents, have both an undeniable historiographical value, and a huge gnosiological capacity, because:

- they are «an element of spiritual being» [4] of their historical time;
- they can unveil «mental and behavioral traditions of their environment» [3];
- they project knowledge and experiences existing in everyday perceptions.

The focus of our study is on the memoirs of the composer Leonid Lissowsky (1866–1934), devoted to one of the brightest and productive periods of his biography: ten years of life and work in Poltava (1899–1909) [5]. In the contemporary musicology, the name of Leonid Lissowsky remains little known. The multifaceted artistic legacy of the musician in the field of Ukrainian and Russian musical cultures has not been explored to this day. Meanwhile, his solid humanitarian and musical education, which included the Kharkov gymnasium, the historical and philological faculty of the Kharkov University (1890), the St. Petersburg Conservatory (composition class led by M.F. Solovyov, 1897) enabled the composer to make a significant contribution to the musical culture of his time. Having studied the biography of L. Lissowsky, one can draw the conclusion that the Poltava decade was one of the brightest and most fruitful periods in the composer's career.

L. Lissowsky described this decade in his memories relying on his personal diaries, which he maintained throughout his life.

The purpose of this article is to paint a social and cultural portrait of Poltava at the turn of the 20th century on the basis of L. Lissowsky's memoirs «Ten Years in Poltava ...».

The statement of the main material. In the early 20th century, Poltava was a rather developed provincial center in the social and cultural respect. The city could boast of several concert halls, such as: the hall of the Second Public Assembly, of the Provincial Zemstvo Office and of the Nobility Assembly. In 1900, the Gogol City Theater was built with a hall for 1000 seats. State and private educational institutions led active educational work in the province. They included: the Poltava Institute of Noble Maidens, the Petrovsky Cadet Corps, the Theological Seminary, the Real School, the Synodal Regent Courses, the Commercial School of A.O. Bayer, musical classes of F. Bazilevich, and many private gymnasiums, musical classes, courses, schools of V. Ahsharumova, N. Staritskaya, V. Neifeld-Kopetskaya, A. Dushkova-Levitina, N. Parizhskaya, I. Goldberg, and F. Levitsky. The Poltava branch of the IRMO (emperor's musical society) was open in 1902.

The local intelligentsia played a particularly significant role in the development of the cultural and artistic life of Poltava. These were well-known scientists, writers, artists, musicians, teachers, and prominent cultural figures, such as: I. Pavlovsky, V. Korolenko, V. Shchepotyev, L. Yanovskaya, G. Markevich, I. Rizenko, D. Ivanenko, Victor and Vladimir Ogolevets, F. Popadich, Grigory and Ivan Myasoedovs, O. Slaktion, A. Erofeev, I. Kozlovsky, V. Starostinetskaya and many others. Living in the province, they maintained close ties with the capital and major cultural centers. Following the lead of the latter, these people founded artistic and theatrical societies, organized music schools and courses, and delivered educational lectures. Local composers sought to publish their works in the leading publishing houses in Moscow (A. Gutheil, P. Jurgenson, A.F. Fedorov and Co.) and in Petersburg (Y. Zimmerman). In line with the traditions of the best European salons, the musical club organized by G. Myasoedov conducted artistic events, where local amateurs performed the best works of the chamber repertoire of the era.

The early 20th century saw the growing number of concert tours in every corner of the country. As soon as construction of the railway section from Kyiv through Poltava to Lozovaya (1901–1903), which became part of the Moscow–Kyiv–Voronezh railway, was completed, domestic and foreign guests poured into Poltava with their concerts. The most frequent visitors to the city were pianists A. Kontsky, A. Ziloti,

A. Arensky, I. Goffman; violinists E. Ondřichek and A. Gabrilovich; cellists Alois and A. Verzhbilovich; chamber duet of L. Auer and A. Miklashevsky. The residents of the province warmly welcomed and cordially greeted the soloists of the Mariinsky Opera Nikolai Figner and Yevgenia Mravina, a Finnish singer Alma Fostrom, Russian celebrities Elizaveta Azerskaya, Stepan Vlasov, Leonid Sobinov and Anastasia Vialtseva. Fans of the dramatic art in Poltava had the opportunity to enjoy the performances of the Korsha Theater (P. Orlenev, V. Komissarzhevskaya, V. Davydov, V. Dalmatov, A. Yuzhin), as well as the works of a famous Russian actress Maria Savina, who toured with the Kharkiv Drama Theater.

It is worth noting that by that time, the rather sophisticated and refined Poltava viewer was not always satisfied with performances of the artists who came to the city in search of commercial benefits and at the same time did not pay due attention to the level of performing skills. Thus, someone called «Mrs. Mirgorodskaya», who performed Lel's aria from the opera «The Snow Maiden» by N. Rimsky-Korsakov, elicited with «her squeaky mezzo soprano Homeric laughter of the audience» [5], whereas the concert of Moscow Opera soloists, the Christman sisters, could not be saved even with «increased» prices for entrance tickets: «*At the beginning, people arrived in bulk, but did not capture any artistic value*» [5]. As we can see, the social and cultural environment in the province by early twentieth century created good conditions for a productive self-realization.

L. Lissowsky moved to Poltava in January 1899 and literally from the first days, as he wrote in his diary, «...it made the most cheerless impression after the capital. Due to the thawing weather the city was unbearably muddy, the musical classes which also housed my [Lissowsky's] apartment (3 rooms for me, and 2 rooms and the hallway for the classes), had no indoor amenities (all in the backyard) notwithstanding the semi-official status of the establishment... <...> On the very first day of classes I intended to go out for a walk in the evening to get some fresh air (as per the Petersburg habit), but at the porch I flopped on the sidewalk almost into a ditch» [7]. Such circumstances caused irritation and the composer stayed home, longing for the capital's walks despite the rain.

Thus, suffering from repeated domestic discomfort and provincial lack of conveniences, L. Lissowsky continued living and working in Poltava for the next ten years. Several factors contributed to his decision. First, he could not refuse from prestigious posts on the provincial level, a music inspector at the Institute of Noble Maidens, the director of musical classes of F. Bazilevich, from the teaching and other, as he put it, «purely musical jobs», which he dreamed about, but could not find in the capital after graduating the conservatory. Secondly, accepting to move to Poltava, the composer intended to realize his creative plans, i.e. in 5–7 years to compose an opera and a symphony. Thirdly, at the time of his arrival from St. Petersburg, L. Lissowsky was married and was raising a daughter. Thus, he had to provide for the family. Obviously, all these circumstances made the musician, as he writes further, «gradually get used to Poltava» [7].

Soon L. Lissowsky noticed that living in the province bears lots of good things. «*The Poltava people were by their nature <...> cheerful, feasting every day, now in one corner, and then in another <...> it was a continuous garland of lunches and dinners, followed by parties and balls hosted by the leader of the nobility, the governor in the Petrovsky Cadet Corps, in The*

Institute of Noble Maidens, and so on and so forth. <...> And I, – L. Lissowsky, – among many, relatively new people in the city, gradually acquired a taste of this idle life» [8].

The «universal Poltava generosity» seemed unsurmountable [7]. The cordiality and hospitality of the citizens of Poltava, the desire to please a guest everywhere were the hallmark of all residents of the region without exception. «*Whoever called me to visit his place» to spend an evening» or have «a cup of tea» – recalls L. Lissowsky – threw such a hearty and tasty treat, which one can only dream about these days ...» [7]. Both for common people and representative of intelligentsia, including high society, a festive meal was a must-have of socializing, an attribute of secular conversation, an indispensable condition of a formal or friendly get together. In the Poltava musical society, gettogethers were elegantly disguised under a rather innocent pretext: a meeting to practice music. As an example, the composer describes his visits to Nikolay Vonsovsky, one of his colleagues and a teacher of music and choral singing of the Poltava Institute of Noble Maiden. A former student of S. Moniuszka, he liked to receive friends «*not for the music, but for a beer, a wine and conversations about the old days ...» [7]. Inviting L. Lissowsky to visit, N. Vonsovsky always tried to pander him with «his menus which included potato zrazy, a root soup, chicken, cheese, vodka, beer, coffee, and port! ...» [6].**

Representatives of the Poltava nobility were also eager to pay attention to the freshly arrived from the capital «free artist». Socializing with them also included lavish meals and music: «*Once it was the headmistress of the Institute [Countess Apraksina] who called me for tea, and we played with her Italian folk songs and Tosti's romances (she played the mandolin, and I was accompanying her on the piano or harmonium); another time the vice-governor and his wife treated me to a dinner and «honored» with their presence two performances of my students; then the director of the Cadet Corps invited me to their Corps' ordinary concert ball; then the leader of the nobility S.E. Brazol paid me visits with invitations to their receptions (and his wife, Elizaveta Petrovna Brazol, sent [Lissowsky] a jar of her wonderful homemade pickles) – the composer recalls [9]. It should be noted that L. Lissowsky's companionship with representatives of the higher society was more pragmatic than friendly in nature. The young composer needed «useful connections» and influential patrons to lead a comfortable life in the province. In his memoirs, the musician explicitly states that he used high-ranking officials' benevolence and loyalty to strengthen his own career positions and realize creative plans.*

Coming back to the topic of gastronomy in L. Lissowsky's memoirs, we note that, in the author's opinion, Poltava's generosity in feasts was surpassed only by residents of the surrounding villages. He repeatedly convinced himself of that, after spending summer vacations at his sister's in Messarozhevka village of Kupyansky district. «*In the countryside, writes the composer, a guest could offend the host if he ate moderately. And my sister vigilantly watched that all the guests not only tried everything, but also had a second helping» [7].*

In many rural families, the cult of food was accompanied by a craving for exotics. Thus, in an effort to make the daily menu of the already rich Ukrainian cuisine yet more diverse, the hosts also demonstrated a passion for other cultures' cookery. Some wealthy residents of the province traditionally employed

Circassians as horse masters, while the latter were masters of the art of cooking lamb shish kebabs. «*And indeed, writes L. Lissowsky, in the fresh country air, after a bit of the exercise, we all inevitably developed wolfish appetite that made us chew and swallow everything that was put on plates and poured. In addition to beer, vodka, wine (sometimes liquor), everything we drank and swallowed was homemade: bread, butter, milk and dairy products, and poultry, and crucian from the pond, and pork, and lamb, and corned beef. And, of course, after two shots of liqueur, we greedily ate two helpings of rich borsch, and tender lamb with a delightful porridge, and after the beer, we were ready to taste pork with porridge or with sour cream and horseradish, or cutlets with carrot sauce or with imported French peas. Then for the dessert we had fruits or berries. And washing all this down with wine and some kvass, we all went "to have a little nap" and to be ... eaten by flies that flocked from the courtyard to the rooms*» [7].

At the same time, against the backdrop of a seemingly carefree and paced life in the province, L. Lissowsky notes the unusually high social activity of all residents of the region without exception: «*The city was deeply interested in every public concern and thoroughly hashed it in their homes*». Any official appointment, which a Kharkov citizen, say, runs through with one eye in a newspaper and shortly forgets, – in Poltava was discussed from all different angles, in every house over the evening samovar. Any county zemstvo assembly, which in a big city had no effect on the everyday life of citizens, like the moon shining in the light of electric lamps, in a relatively small city like Poltava filled the life of citizens with deep emotions and discussions. And on such days there was a great deal of activity even in the streets». In this sense, the author concludes: «*The Poltava citizens*» were in a sense setting an example for us, the residents of the capital ...» [9].

To challenge a statement broadly used with respect to the Ukrainians, like «It's no skin off my nose ...», the residents of the province had an acute sense of justice, deep empathy and involvement in the fate of their neighbor. Lissowsky wrote in memoirs about a high profile court case against the brothers Skitsky, two Poltava residents, accused of murdering O. Komarov, the secretary of the Poltava ecclesiastical consistory. The investigation that lasted almost three years had huge reverberations. The hearings took place in a few stages and each proclaimed verdict was met with vibrant and immediate response from the Poltava residents. L. Lissowsky's says in the memoirs the following: «*On May 28, the whole city was colossally tensed, hourly expecting news about the judgment of the District Court <...>. And when, finally, closer to the wonderful evening, an acquittal was pronounced to both brothers who had already spent in prison almost three years, the whole city, we might say, rushed to the street (the former Novopoltavskaya) to the apartment of the Skitskys' defender, a private attorney Moses Danilovich Zelensky, and greeted him with loud and enthusiastic applause*» [9].

It is worth noting that L. Lissowsky's memoirs to a greater degree characterize the way of living of the community to which the composer was close due to his professional activities. A hallmark of the city's music life of those years were summer garden concerts, regularly held in the open grounds of the Poltava City Gardens. Participants of the concerts were mostly the musicians of D. Akhsharumov's Symphony Orchestra. The repertoire of the garden concerts included popular symphonic and brass tunes of dance genres: waltzes, polka, and mazurkas.

It is known that the orchestra members were paid little, and it is therefore, clear that the participation of professional musicians in such performances was a kind of practice during breaks between seasonal symphony meetings, and a possibility to earn additional, albeit small, honorary. L. Lissowsky recalls one of the curious cases that he observed during a garden concert. «... On June 5, our musicians played at the farewell party of the court prosecutor, who was saying goodbye to Poltava before his new appointment to another city (obviously, to a higher position ...). The performance of the orchestra, which began at 2 p.m., lasted until 8 p.m., followed by the garden performance for the public. Fortunately, this time the garden concert repertoire was light consisting mostly of waltzes. So, the musicians could play their parts by heart, half-asleep. I was especially amused by the play in the half-sleep of two violinists Voronelya and Lipskar. They played almost all the time only the second and third quarters, accompanying the waltz: and they did it correctly, with their eyes absolutely stuck together in a half-sleep, or maybe in a complete sleep. Sitting beside them (the orchestra was playing in a restaurant for dancing), I felt a boyish desire to run them a «hussar» in the nose. Then I burst out laughing and drew attention [of those who were sitting next to me] to these artists and their brilliant memory. And indeed, to play in one's sleep, by heart, not a full melody, <...> and at the same time not to be mistaken by a tiny bit – this is what I call a genius!» [9].

In Poltava, as the musician fairly notes, any, even the slightest engagement in the art was heartily admired. Love and the desire to learn and practice music even «without any gift to it» [8] caused special admiration among amateurs and bewilderment of professionals. Someone Semyon Grygorievich Zaitsev, a bank employee, with connections in almost all cities of Russia was well recognized by the Poltava community as a «music expert». For a long time he played in the D. Akhsharumov orchestra as an amateur. L. Lissowsky wrote about him: «*And my dear Semyon Grigorievich loved to be in full public view. <...> Therefore, he always played the timpani standing, and his tall figure in the depth of the orchestra rose like the bell tower of the cathedral. And to make as little movement as possible, Zaitsev simply stood invariably straight the entire play from beginning to end. One could have thought that he was some kind of a ticket controller*» [8, p.61].

Among the Poltava «insane» musical critics, as the author calls her, was Nadezhda Viktorovna Yanovich, a distant relative of N.V. Gogol. She «... was very fond of playing four hands, but of course, in her «snail» tempo and without agreement with the partner. And on the days that followed, telling someone she knew about her last playing, <...> she added something like this: «*Yesterday, Maria Vladimirovna and I played Mendelssohn's violin concerto in four hands. It turned out very cute, the difference was only 2 times*» (!) This meant that each partner played on her own, completely ignorant and not listening to what the other was playing and falling short 2 times!.. Hearing such statements, or else, it would be more correct to say, hearing such interlocutors, – L. Lissowsky writes further, *I got bored and hellishly longed for the capital*» [7].

The composer's longing for Petersburg was further exacerbated by the guest performers visiting the province. Every time, as he was writing a review of the next celebrity's concert, Lissowski was desperate to fly away from Poltava to St. Petersburg [9]. However, there were musicians in the province, communication with which was not only enjoyable,

but also served lesson even for an experienced professional. L. Lissowsky recalls playing a duet with Ekaterina Afanasyevna Chernysh: «*This lady, in spite of her small deafness in one ear, turned out to be an ideal partner in four hands on the piano, <...> better than even Ekaterina Aloisovna Zaitseva, with whom I have played thus far. And it was a great pleasure for me to play with Chernysh the «Pathetic symphony» by P. Tchaikovsky and three parts of the symphony (C-dur) by F. Schubert*». Moreover, a rehearsal of the concert with the violinist V. Feld, suddenly reminded the composer of the times of his youth in the conservatory and piano lessons with Professor F.F. Cherni: «*The violinist turned out to be an exquisite musician and gave me hard time asking to repeat the accompaniment, forcing to produce all shades without exaggeration and as if «under the veil». I remember that at first I was «taken aback», and then I understood, coped with it and was pleased*», writes the composer [9, p.69].

The composer speaks warmly of his colleagues at school. He mentions already known to us Nikolai Vonsovsky, a cellist in D. Akhsharumov symphony orchestra, pianists Yekaterina Zaitseva and Galina Semenchenko, and Julia Koshevskaya «*who arranged at her place music evenings and morning parties for her little students*» [7, p.7-8]. The most recognized in Poltava was Mikhail Aleksandrovich Miloradovich, a student of N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov. L. Lissowsky was fond of sitting down with him «*for a friendly conversation and music, and sharing his “giblets”*» [8, p.61], – this is how the musicians referred to his compositions.

Conclusions. Memoirs of Lissowsky «Ten years in Poltava ...» have unconditional historiographical and cultural value. The source gives the reader a real opportunity to tackle upon the little-known pages of the cultural heritage of the pre-revolutionary Poltava: in live pictures and vivid images it reproduces the artistic and cultural events of the provincial city, conveys an exciting atmosphere of creative sharing and discussions between Poltava music lovers; it depicts the unrivaled beauty of Poltava landscapes, the sincerity and hospitality of Poltava residents.

The rich writing style of L. Lissowsky's memoirs is a natural manifestation of the author's remarkability, emotionality, natural sense of humor and philological talent.

Memoirs of Lissowsky «Ten Years in Poltava ...» is a unique portrait of the time, represented through the prism of the individuality of the artist. The author in detail demonstrates the life-style of different layers of provincial society, highlighting their tastes and beliefs, the degree of social activity and worldview, traditions and preferences, thanks to which the social and cultural image of Poltava in the early 20th century is perceived as the image of the era in general.

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СОЦІОКУЛЬТУРНИЙ ПОРТРЕТ ПОЛТАВИ ПОЧАТКУ ХХ СТОЛІТТЯ У СПОГАДАХ ЛЕОНІДА ЛІСОВСЬКОГО

Проаналізовано маловідомі спогади композитора Леоніда Лісовського (1866–1934) присвячені одному з найяскравіших періодів його життя та діяльності у Полтаві на початку ХХ століття. У мемуарах відтворено атмосферу старої Полтави й спосіб життя її жителів, розкрито особисті, професійні й громадські зв'язки Л. Лісовського, подано психологічний портрет автора і його оточення.

Ключові слова: соціокультурний портрет, Полтавська губернія, Леонід Лісовський, спогади, музичне середовище.

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