

CHERES

Hailed to be “the best purveyor of authentic Ukrainian folk music in the United States” by the former head of the Archive of Folk Culture at the Library of Congress, Cheres brings to life melodies from the Carpathian mountains in Western Ukraine and neighboring Eastern European countries. Since its founding in 1990 by students of the Kyiv State Conservatory in the Ukraine, the ensemble has enthralled North American audiences with their rousing renditions of folk music performed on the cymbalum, violin, woodwinds, accordion, bass, and percussion. Virtuoso musicians join spirited dancers, all donned in traditional Western Ukrainian hand-embroidered garments, to paint a vivid picture of Ukrainian folk art.

The musicians, most of whom are from Halychyna in western Ukraine, are united by an artistic vision to preserve their traditions. “Cheres” is actually a little known Ukrainian term for a metal-studded leather belt formerly used as a bulletproof vest during the Middle Ages. Today, the group Cheres has adopted this Medieval protective shield as their name to symbolize the safeguarding of vanishing folk art traditions from the Carpathian mountains.

This seasoned ensemble has performed in nightclubs and concerts in New York City; music festivals in the Tri-State area, including Lincoln Center’s Out of Doors Festival in 2006 and Folk Parks in 2000, as well as colleges and universities on the east coast. Cheres has appeared on television on NBC’s *Weekend Today* show, as well as the Food Network’s *Surprise!* show. Tracks from their latest CD, *Cheres: From the Mountains to the Steppe* have been played on WNYC’s *New Sounds* program, as well as other stations in the region.

Besides performing, Cheres is strongly committed to educational programs. For several years, they have conducted Eastern European music and dance workshops in New York City schools.



On the Highlands

The *trembita*, a 12-foot long wooden pipe, is used by shepherd mountain folk to communicate from hilltop to hilltop. Each year, shepherds leave their homes for months at a time to live in pasture lands with their sheep. The ritual campfire, which is ablaze throughout the grazing season, not only serves to ward off hungry wolves, but also to protect everyone's good fortune.

Legend of the Opryshky

An homage to Oleksa Dovbush, a Carpathian "Robin Hood," and his brigade. The Opryshky appeared on the historical stage of the 15th century and were stamped out by the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the 1820s.

The Flurry

A wedding processional from the Bukovyna region of the Carpathians, which tells of a young man on horseback setting out for his bride-to-be. Waiting for her beloved, the bride-to-be feels as beautiful as a poppy in bloom and ponders the end of her maidenhood.

HOP-HA-HO

A festive polka from the verdant foothills of the Carpathian Mountains, especially popular among couples for its lifts and spins.

OH, MOON

A ballad from the steppe about a young girl's love for a Kazak. She puts his horses out to pasture every evening until the dew falls on her long braid, all the while doubting she will ever wear the wedding wreath.

BLACK MOUNTAIN

The mountain stronghold of the Opryshky, a group of rebel farmers who fought for fairness in their relations with the landlords, who were often foreigners. The opening violin theme features the age-old *Lament of Oleksa Dovbush's Mother*.

BY THE STREAM

A Carpathian landscape with a solo *zozulka* (ocarina or sweet potato) summoning the musicians and village folk to an impromptu dance.

ROCKING THE CRADLE

A lullaby from eastern Ukraine: "Sleep, my child, in this cradle hanging from the apple tree and grow strong like the wood you are nestled in..."

HORSEBACK RIDER'S CALL

A Bukovynian instrumental rounding up the lads for a *zabava*, or dance celebration, at a neighboring village.

KOLOMYIKY

A traditional circle dance-song from the Hutsul town of Kolomyia (literally "wheel-washing place"), named by travelers who would stop there to wash their wagon wheels en route to distant villages. Performed on the double flute.

UKRAINIAN INSTRUMENTS

CYMBALOM

- Trapezoid dulcimer (zither sounded by striking rather than plucking)
- Popular in Eastern Europe
- Played in seated or standing position by striking strings with wooden hammers
- Two types:
 - ◆ Small cymbalom
 - ◆ Concert cymbalom
 - Developed in Hungary and becoming more popular
 - Contains a full chromatic range of four and a half octaves
- Similar instrument can be found in Greece, Rumania, Lithuania, Poland, Byelorussia, Latvia, Hungary

DVODENTSIVKA

- Double pipe
- Two pipes are joined together to form one instrument
- Only one pipe has playing holes
- The other pipe is the same length, but does not have any holes and acts as a drone

FRILKA

- Hollow pipe with six to ten holes
- Pipe can be made of wood, metal, or plastic
- Player must break his/her breath against the wall of the tube
- Sound produced is similar to that of the flute

NAJ

- Pan pipes
- One of the most ancient of folk instruments
 - ◆ Have been found in archaeological excavations in Eastern Europe that date back 5,000 years
- Traditionally used in Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine
- Consists of approximately 20 to 25 pipes joined together from large to small

SOPILKA

- Family of flute-like woodwind instruments
- Larger than *frilka* and produces lower sound

TREMBITA

- Twelve-foot long wooden shepherd's pipe

TYLYNKA

- Metal pipe without finger holes

ZOZULKA

- Ocarina – egg-shaped vessel flute with 10 holes, usually fabricated with clay
- Invented in Italy around 1860
 - ◆ Name *ocarina* means “little goose”
- Ukrainian *zozulka* belongs to the family of whistle instruments
- Widespread in the Carpathian mountains among the Hutsuls
- Name is derived from word for a small cuckoo bird

DIRECTOR'S PROFILE

Andriy Milavsky Holds a Master's Degree in Music from the Kyiv State Conservatory in Ukraine. An accomplished clarinetist, he has toured Western and Eastern Europe with State Orchestras such as the Kyiv, Moscow, Tartu and Lviv, performing classical and folk repertoires at major venues. Since his arrival in the United States in 1991, Andriy Milavsky has appeared with the Kyiv Symphony Orchestra, the Amato and Riverside Operas, worked on experimental projects, produced Off Broadway shows, and taught music privately and institutionally. His teaching experience abroad, as well as Stateside, has set a precedent among educators in music. Currently, Andriy Milavsky performs regularly as a B-flat, A, E-flat, and bass clarinetist with opera and symphony orchestras, woodwind and string quintets and other ensembles.

INTERVIEW

How did you choose your art form and what attracted you to it?

I joined my grandfather's mountain village wedding as a drummer at the age of five or six. At the time, I just followed my intuition. Later, at the age of 26, I realized how deep and ancient the music is – reaching back to pre-Christian times.

What sacrifices did you make while learning?

Sleepless nights playing village weddings, shrunken soccer playing time and other activities, and bad posture as a result of endless practicing. But, if I had to choose again, I would follow the same path.

What is your specialty?

I studied classical music from the age of 8 to 24, when I graduated from the Kyiv State Conservatory in 1986 with a Master's degree in clarinet and conducting. Studying European classical music helped me understand the basics of composition and the whole structure of the arts. It wasn't until later that I came to the realization that classical and contemporary music originated with folk music.

What point are you at in your career?

I think that I am well-established, but I also understand that growing is a life-long process.

UKRAINE

The Carpathian mountain region of western Ukraine has been at the center of major overlays of cultures and conflicts at least since the Tartars invaded some 800 years ago. Culturally, the area has been distinct for a far longer period, and yet it has absorbed influences from many of the alternating dominating powers surrounding the region, including Russia, Hungary, Poland, and Romania. The area has also been influenced by Jewish and Gypsy culture. At the same time, the Carpathian Mountains also offered protection from the waves of cultural reforms and control exercised by the former Soviet Union until 1991, when the Ukraine won its independence. Thus, traditions that have all but vanished elsewhere in Eastern Europe and the eastern Ukraine have been maintained up to the present generation in western Ukraine. These include *Hutsul* melodies of *troista muzyka* (the traditional trio of instruments, including the violin, drum, and *cymbalom*), the *Bertep* folk theater, short lyrical and sometimes satirical songs known as *chastushky*, epic ballads known as *protyazhniye* (literally meaning “long drawn out”), and laments or *duma*.

G L O S S A R Y

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| A capella | Vocal music that is performed without any instrumental accompaniment. |
| Arrangement | An adaptation and orchestration of a musical composition to a different medium than what it was originally intended for. |
| Band | A group of musicians performing together. |
| Bass | A musical instrument that produces tones in a low register (e.g. – electric bass, double bass, and tuba). |
| Beat | A steady succession of rhythmic units. |
| Chorus | The section of a song that a group of singers or musicians repeats at certain intervals. |
| Composer | One who writes music. |
| Cymbalom | Trapezoidal string instrument struck with wooden hammers. Also known as <i>tsymbaly</i> . |
| Ensemble | A group of musicians, singers, and/or dancers. |
| Harmony | The relationship between chords, their progression and structure that result in a sound that is pleasing to the ear. |
| Improvisation | The unplanned and spontaneous creation of music during a performance. |
| Interpretation | A performer's expression of a particular conception of a musical composition. |
| Lyrics | The words in a song. |
| Melody | A succession of notes that forms a distinctive sequence; a tune. |
| Musical Director | One who oversees all aspects of an orchestra's musical production and often serves as the conductor. |
| Percussion | The sound produced by beating or striking a musical instrument, such as a drum. |
| Pitch | The quality of a sound that is correlated its frequency. A high pitch is associated with a higher frequency, while a low pitch is linked to a lower frequency. |
| Pulse | A single stroke of sound. Rattles and jingles add strong pulses to music. |
| Repertoire | The list of songs and dances that an artist or ensemble is prepared to perform. |
| Resonance | Prolongation or intensification of a sound achieved through vibration (e.g. – echo). |
| Rhythm | The regular pattern of sounds at a particular speed or tempo. |

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| Solo | A composition or passage performed by one voice or instrument, with or without accompaniment. |
| Syncopation | The act of stressing unaccented beats. |
| Tempo | The speed at which music is played. |
| Timbre | The quality of sound that differentiates one instrument from another; tone color. |
| Trembita | A twelve-foot long wooden shepherd's pipe. |
| Zozulka | Ocarina or sweet potato, as it is known the southern United States. |

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