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## The Emissaries of the Wandering Beggars’ Tradition – on the Issues of Hurdy-Gurdy – Past and Present

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### Abstract

The subject of the wandering beggars’ songs and their functioning in culture has been discussed many times in the Polish folklore studies and ethnomusicology. In the practical sense, it could seem that the beggars’ song is a historical subject, closed a long time ago, similarly as hurdy-gurdy playing – one of its most interesting manifestations. Nevertheless, songs of hurdy-gurdy players have returned triumphantly these days, performed by amateur and professional musicians. Furthermore, we can observe the phenomenon of consolidation of musicians, not only into bands, but also in wider projects (festivals, academies, meetings of hurdy-gurdy players). The author presents a concise description of hurdy-gurdy playing traditions, the instrument itself, its song repertoire and the contemporary reconstruction of these traditions that is attempted by some environments.

**Keywords:** wandering beggars’ songs, hurdy-gurdist, hurdy-gurdy, the Academy of Wandering Musicians.

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Posłuchajże wierny ludu, [Harken, faithful people]  
 oczyść duszę z grzechów brudu, [cleanse your souls of the filth of sin]  
 bo nastaną ciężkie lata [for hard times are coming]  
 i nadejdzie koniec świata. [and the end of the world is nigh]  
 [...] (wandering beggars' song from Lubelszczyzna, the historical region of Lublin)  
 [all translations – Artur Wagner]

The European tradition of hurdy-gurdy playing was without doubt a cultural phenomenon that still holds many secrets. It has never been fully analysed – it is multi-faceted and can be studied from the perspective of different disciplines, though three dimensions, linguistic, cultural and musical, play the most essential role. The context of transmission and the modern practice of hurdy-gurdy traditions is no less important and yet least explored. The subject matter indicated in the title of this work also gains new meaning at “the time of the plague” – currently, in the age of the coronavirus pandemic. The contents and the underlying message of the wandering beggars' song may now be seen in a completely new light – they become surprisingly relevant today. Or, perhaps, it is only because one of the fundamental meanings of the song strikes us more strongly, and we reach the conclusion that the apocalyptic motif has a lot of potential and can become relevant again.

The issues addressed in the wandering beggars' songs, and the way in which they function in culture have been repeatedly discussed in Polish folklore studies<sup>1</sup>. These songs have been written down since the time of Oskar Kolberg<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The research in this area was primarily conducted by specialists in literature and folklorists. Cf. i.a. the following works: Cz. Hernas, *Z epiki dziadowskiej*, “Pamiętnik Literacki” 1958, vol. 49, z. 4; P. Grochowski, *Dziady. Rzecz o wędrownych żebrakach i ich pieśniach*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, Toruń 2009; P. Grochowski, *Straszna zbrodnia rodzonej matki. Polskie pieśni nowiniarskie na przełomie XIX i XX w.*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, Toruń 2010. S. Nyrkowski, *Karnawał dziadowski. Pieśni wędrownych śpiewaków (XIX–XX w.)*, selected and compiled by S. Nyrkowski, Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, Warszawa 1977; M. Waliński, *Pieśń jarmarczna? Nowiniarska? Ballada? Czy – pieśń dziadowska? Prolegomena do badań pieśni dziadowskiej*, [in:] *Wszystek krąg ziemski*, ed. P. Kowalski, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 1998. Cf. also works by foreign authors, particularly: K. Mikhaylova, *Dziad wędrowny jako postać mediacyjna w kulturze ludowej Słowian*, [in:] *Fascynacje folklorystyczne. Księga poświęcona pamięci Heleny Kapeluś*, AGADE, Warszawa 2002, pp. 101–108; K. Mikhaylova, *Dziad wędrowny w kulturze ludowej Słowian*, trans. H. Karpińska, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 2010, 488 pages; Cf. also wandering beggars' songs published in strictly musicological publications: *Polskie śpiewy religijne społeczności katolickich. Studia i materiały*, Vol. 1, ed. B. Bartkowski, Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, Lublin 1990, pp. 318–337 and S. Niebrzegowska, *Pieśni dziadowskie*, [in:] *Polska pieśń i muzyka ludowa. Źródła i materiały*, vol. 4, *Lubelskie*, part 3, *Pieśni i obrzędy doroczne*, (ed.) J. Bartmiński, series ed. L. Bielawski, Instytut Sztuki PAN, Lublin 2011, pp. 623–664.

<sup>2</sup> Cf.: O. Kolberg, *Dziela wszystkie*, Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza; Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, Wrocław – Poznań 1961–1995, particularly the following volumes: vol. 6, 9, 12, 19, 22, 27, 30, 40, 45.

A number of anthologies and monographs devoted to the wandering beggars' song have been created in the recent years.<sup>3</sup> It is worth noting that some of the works that are of interest to us are clearly ethnomusicological or interdisciplinary<sup>4</sup>.

In the practical sense, it could seem that the wandering beggars' song is a thing of the past, and the hurdy-gurdy music, which is one of its most interesting manifestations, is merely a musical and cultural phenomenon and an area for diachronic research. However, the hurdy-gurdy and the repertoire of its players are making a successful return in amateur and professional performances. The songs and adaptations of instrumental pieces may now be heard at universities, in concert halls and even in the streets of European cities (they are promoted on the Internet as well). We are also observing the phenomenon of consolidating individual musicians not only into ensembles but broader artistic or teaching-oriented projects (festivals, competitions, instrumental, vocal and violin workshops, conventions of hurdy-gurdy players). The hurdy-gurdy has returned to life after years of hiatus. It is, therefore, to be expected that the issues addressed in the article are presented from a panchronic perspective. It could be said, in a sense, that history has come full circle, since the instrument in question was particularly successful in Europe from the 10th to the 19th century, that is in the period of the greatest popularity of the hurdy-gurdy both among professional and amateur musicians. It was also the case later on (17th–19th century), when the hurdy-gurdy was driven out of artistic music and became a strictly folk instrument<sup>5</sup>. It was then that it started to be primarily used as an accompanying instrument – most often with the wandering beggars' songs.

Anna Kopeć-Bednarska – one of the first Polish researchers of the issues discussed in this article from the perspective of instrumental studies – believes that the cause for the downfall of the hurdy-gurdy and the fact that it was driven out of high culture was its sound.<sup>6</sup> The author draws to attention to the “unrefined

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. footnote no. 1 and no. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Works in the field of instrumental studies are predominant here. Cf.: A. [Kopeć]-Bednarska, *Z przeszłości liry korbowej w Polsce*, [in:] A. Dygacz, A. Kopoczek, *Polskie instrumenty ludowe. Studia folklorystyczne*, Uniwersytet Śląski, Katowice 1981, pp. 29–30; Z.J. Przerembski, *Innowacje w budowie liry korbowej w Polsce*, “Muzyka” 1993, nos. 3–4; Z. J. Przerembski, *Z dziejów praktyki lirycznej na ziemiach Rzeczypospolitej*, “Muzyka” 1996, no. 3, pp. 95–107; C. Sachs, *The History of Musical Instruments*, New York 1940, pp. 271–273. Cf. also English-language works, particularly: N. Kononenko, *Ukrainian Minstrels. And the blind shall sing*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk – New York – London, 1998. P. Dahlig, *Lirnik jako postać mediacyjna między ziemią a niebem*, [in:] P. Dahlig, *Traditional musical cultures in central-eastern Europe. Ecclesiastical and folk transmission*, Instytut Muzykologii Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Instytut Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Towarzystwo Naukowe Warszawskie, Warsaw 2009, pp. 415–428; R. Mazur-Hanaj, *Lirnik-dziad i jego pieśni*, [in:] P. Dahlig, *Traditional musical cultures in central-eastern Europe...*, pp. 397–414. Some of the works are distinctly interdisciplinary (Cf. footnote no. 1).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. A. [Kopeć]-Bednarska, op.cit., p. 33.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

tone of the hurdy-gurdy” in comparison with other instruments that were becoming immensely popular in the 17th century. It is worth adding, however, that a significant reason for that could be the creative development of vocal and instrumental music in relation to the capabilities of the hurdy-gurdy and the nature of its accompaniment. The instrument produces a continuous drone, which makes it impossible (or very difficult) to use it in music based on functional harmony. This concerns both instrumental and vocal compositions.

The hurdy-gurdy regained the favour of professional musicians for a brief period in the 18th century, only to be completely (although, as it turns out, not forever) relegated to the use of wandering musicians. The status of these people in folk culture was not clear from today’s perspective, yet it certainly was not “the lowest” – even though they earned their living as beggars, they constituted an elite among the peasantry. Not being able to climb the social ladder, they became the liaison between high and low culture, the court and the wooden huts of the simple folk, the city and the countryside. This corresponded to other important functions the beggars had in traditional culture and focused on the mediatory status of the hurdy-gurdy player, who acted as the middleman between the two worlds<sup>7</sup>, between the *sacrum* and *profanum*<sup>8</sup>. It was undoubtedly an important reason for the advancement of these figures in the artistic works of the Romantics, who admired the folk, fairy-tale and metaphysical character of these eternally rebellious explorers.

What happened later was a complex product of the industrial revolution and the subsequent eras, their resulting worldviews, conquests, isms and inventions. The hurdy-gurdy players survived all of that and were still in demand as prophets, bards, emissaries, spies, and tellers of stories from the high society – not only the sacred ones. Behind the closed doors of local rural communities, they performed the functions that radio and television fulfil today.

Their dark end resulted from Stalin’s hatred towards the wise wanderers, the spirit of the free nation. The leading role in their extermination was played by his iteration of communism. The traditional hurdy-gurdy, bandura and kobza players who were active in the USSR could not survive. They were too big of a problem for the regime – a quintessence of freedom and independence. Organised in guilds and fraternities, they spread the Christian faith, were seen as unquestioned authority figures and disseminated true information (in defiance of the censorship). In the mid-1930s, the I Polish National Convention of Hurdy-Gurdy and Bandura Players was organized; it was attended by several hundred musicians from all of Ukraine – “a living museum, living history of the country”<sup>9</sup>. Nearly all of the self-

<sup>7</sup> Read more about this concept in: P. Dahlig, op. cit., s. 415–428.

<sup>8</sup> A remarkably interesting trope is indicated by Z. J. Przerembski, who claims that the wandering beggar/hurdy-gurdy player would also treat people, know a lot about herbs and give magical treatments. Cf. Z. J. Przerembski, *Z dziejów praktyki lirniczej*..., p. 100.

<sup>9</sup> The memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich are quoted after K. Bilica, *Lira korbowa czy lira?*, “Ruch Muzyczny” 1989, no. 14, p. 20. The authenticity of that Convention was questioned by historians.

-taught artists were murdered, although the details of the crime have not been fully explained<sup>10</sup>.

In this part of Europe, in the mid-1930s, the only hurdy-gurdy players who survived lived within the borders of the Second Polish Republic:

Jarosław Iwaskiewicz recalls that in the 1920s, he saw a wandering beggar singing an "apocalyptic" song with hurdy-gurdy accompaniment on a market day in Sandomierz; he even memorised a fragment of the text. In Krosno County before World War II, a wandering beggar and hurdy-gurdy player used to visit people's houses at Christmastime. Folk musicians would also perform in this region, mostly in nativity plays but also with the accompaniment of other instrumentalists – a wedding band<sup>11</sup>.

After 1939, the majority of hurdy-gurdy players who were active in Poland shared the fate of their brothers from the USSR as a result of the war and the following extermination of civil population. Few of them survived – Roman Jasiński met one of the last hurdy-gurdy players in the Paris underground<sup>12</sup>.

Having presented a brief account of the history of these folk artists, we shall devote a little more space to the main instrument of the wandering musicians. The geographical distribution of the hurdy-gurdy in Europe was very broad – from Santiago de Compostela at the edge of the continent to Ukraine, from Sweden to sunny Italy<sup>13</sup>. Different types<sup>14</sup> of hurdy-gurdies were present in this vast area, and they evolved over time.

The oldest source that provides a detailed description of the hurdy-gurdy, or more exactly its original version that was known as *organistrum* in the middle

<sup>10</sup> Cf. K. Bilica, op.cit., p. 20. The number of victims and the place of execution are unknown (the most common estimations vary from 200 to 1300 victims, probably including under-age guides of blind musicians). The murder may have taken place near Kharkiv. It should be noted that this subject is still greatly controversial, especially in Ukraine–Russia relations. It is also of interest to filmmakers – in particular, the 2014 film: "Поводир" ["Povodir"] (cf. source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTQH44QJtbU> [access: 17.11.2019]).

<sup>11</sup> Z. J. Przerembski, *Z dziejów praktyki lirniczej...*, p. 104. Cf. also J. Iwaskiewicz, *Podróże do Polski*, ALFA, Warszawa 1987, pp. 188–189.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. K. Bilica, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, the practice of playing and singing with the accompaniment of the hurdy-gurdy has survived at the aforementioned edges of Europe (Spanish Galicia and Ukraine). It is, perhaps, because peripheral archaisms have a tendency to survive. Read more about the theory of peripheral archaisms in: Z. Stieber, *O archaizmach i innowacjach peryferycznych*, [in:] J. Kuryłowicz (ed.), *Studia indoeuropejskie, Prace Komisji Językoznawstwa*, no. 37, Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków – Gdańsk 1974, pp. 239–241.

<sup>14</sup> This subject, concerning the field of instrumental studies, is fairly complex and cannot be discussed in detail in this article. Read more about the design and types of lyres in: A. [Kopeć]-Bednarska, op. cit., pp. 29–57; Z. J. Przerembski, *Innowacje w budowie liry...*; Z.J. Przerembski, *Z dziejów praktyki lirniczej...*, pp. 95–107. There is evidence of traces of the hurdy-gurdy beyond western Europe in the 18th century (to simplify: Galician, French and German types of the instrument) but also in today's Hungary, Czech Republic, Romania, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine and Poland (different types of design). Cf. A. [Kopeć]-Bednarska, op. cit., p. 33; Z.J. Przerembski, *Innowacje w budowie liry...*, pp. 92–97.

ages, is the treatise entitled *Quomodo organistrum construatur* (How to build a hurdy-gurdy) attributed to the abbot Odo de Cluny<sup>15</sup>. The cathedral Santiago de Compostela, built in the years 1075–1150, houses the oldest depiction (a bas-relief) of the instrument<sup>16</sup>.

A synthetic description of the instrument and its origin was provided by Curt Sachs:

The hurdy-gurdy was a kind of mechanical *fiddle* in which, instead of a bow, a revolving wheel, concealed inside and turning by a handle, rubbed the strings, and a set of stopping rods were substituted for the touching fingers. We do not know its exact age<sup>17</sup>.



**Fig. 1.** Hurdy-gurdy from Łękawka near Tarnów, early 19th century (instrument from the collection of the Museum of Ethnography in Kraków, phot. Ulrich Wagner, 1989)

It should be added that the name “lira korbowa” [cranked lyre, the commonly used name of the instrument in Polish] is a professional term – in specialist terminology it is known as: turning lyre, wheel lyre, German lyre, beggar’s lyre, peasant’s lyre or blind man’s lyre<sup>18</sup>. Polish folk tradition, in which the classical lyre (an instrument of entirely different construction and provenance) was not known, had no need for the above-mentioned adjectives – it was simply called the lyre<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> A. [Kopeć]-Bednarska, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. reproductions and its description: A. [Kopeć]-Bednarska, op. cit., pp. 30–31.

<sup>17</sup> C. Sachs, op.cit., p. 271.

<sup>18</sup> A number of names for this instrument functioned in Europe – they were reviewed in detail by A. [Kopeć]-Bednarska, op. cit., pp. 32–33. Cf. also Z.J. Przerembski, *Z dziejów praktyki lirniczej...*, p. 97 and K. Moszyński, *Kultura ludowa Słowian*, vol. 2, part 2, *Kultura duchowa*, Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa 1968, pp. 605–606.

<sup>19</sup> A. [Kopeć]-Bednarska, op. cit., p. 32.

Kazimierz Moszyński claims that:

starting from the 8th-10th century, it became much more popular in western Europe among the upper and eventually the lower classes as well, spreading east with time towards Hungary and through Poland towards Ruthenia, which it reached in the 16<sup>th</sup> century at the latest<sup>20</sup>.

Nevertheless, it is a fact that the first credible Polish account of the instrument dates back to the 17th century and concerns Moscow, where, during a Polish intervention concluded by capturing the city, the Pole Samuel Maskiewicz heard and saw the hurdy-gurdy in 1611 at weddings organised in the houses of Moscow boyars. He also prepared its general description<sup>21</sup>. If Ruthenia borrowed the instrument through the Republic of Poland, it seems somewhat strange that no credible descriptions of the instrument had existed there before<sup>22</sup>.

In Poland, the instrument was mainly used in the folk music of the eastern regions of the Republic of Poland and in the areas of today's Ukraine and Belarus. We have scant information about the hurdy-gurdy players active in Warsaw (the famous Błękitny Płaszcz [Blue Coat]), Sandomierz and Mazovia<sup>23</sup>. Prior to World War I, a photograph of a hurdy-gurdy player was taken near Puławy<sup>24</sup>.

The musicians certainly reached central Poland and the Vistula river (which is an interesting delimitation), but it was definitely not the main area of their activity. In the ethnically Polish areas, the wandering beggars' songs were chiefly sung a cappella or with the accompaniment of the bagpipes<sup>25</sup>, violin<sup>26</sup> and, in the 20th century, of the accordion<sup>27</sup>.

In order to explain the contemporary phenomenon of the revitalization of the instrument and the songs that are currently sung with its accompaniment, we have to (only briefly) characterise the subculture of the wandering beggars and their music, which serves as the foundation, inspiration, starting point and model for modern artists.

The term *dziady* [wandering beggars] had and still has multiple (often opposing) meanings: *zejść na dziady* [to go the dogs], *dziadować* [to live in poverty], *dziadowka* [a female beggar] but also *Dziady* [Forefathers' Eve] by Mickiewicz,

<sup>20</sup> K. Moszyński, op. cit., p 606.

<sup>21</sup> After: Z. J. Przerembski, *Z dziejów praktyki lirniczej...*, p. 97.

<sup>22</sup> All of the earlier evidence of the instrument's presence in the First Republic of Poland is fairly ambiguous. Cf. A. [Kopeć]-Bednarska, op. cit., pp. 34–36; Z. J. Przerembski, *Z dziejów praktyki lirniczej...*, p. 96. Perhaps it reached Ruthenia earlier than Moszyński suggests. The hypothesis of the independent invention of the hurdy-gurdy in eastern Europe should also be taken into account, although it is questionable. Cf. N. Kononenko, op. cit.

<sup>23</sup> Z.J. Przerembski, *Z dziejów praktyki lirniczej...*, p. 103.

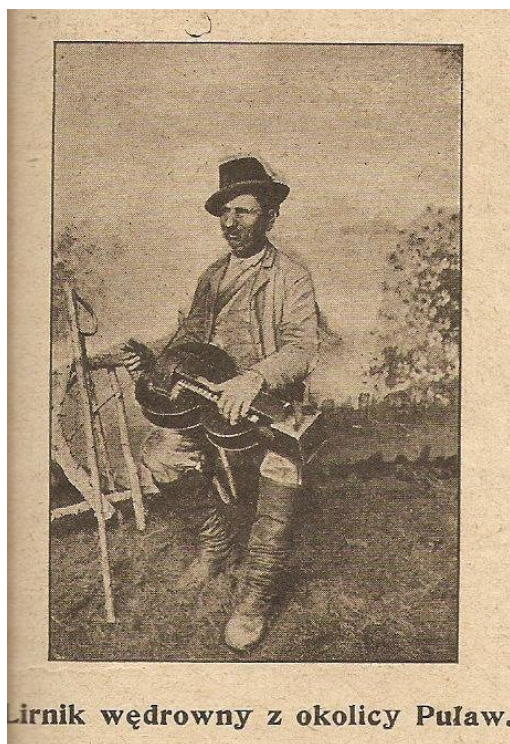
<sup>24</sup> Copy of the photograph from the Author's collection. The illustration comes from the Poznań political and literary weekly "Praca" of 14 July 1912.

<sup>25</sup> Z.J. Przerembski, *Z dziejów praktyki lirniczej...*, p. 102.

<sup>26</sup> R. Mazur-Hanaj, *Lirnik-dziad i jego pieśni...*, p. 411.

<sup>27</sup> Z.J. Przerembski, *Z dziejów praktyki lirniczej...*, p. 102.

a poetic drama concerning the authentic rites performed in honour of the ancestors, which have survived in Belarus until the present day<sup>28</sup>.



**Fig. 2.** Hurdy-gurdy player from the region of Puławy. Political and literary weekly “Praca” of 14 July 1912

Researchers such as Piotr Grochowski, Piotr Dahlig and Katya Mikhaylova have proved that the wanderings beggars were perceived as the representatives of the spirit world<sup>29</sup>. The word *dziad* is particularly ambiguous (57 dictionary entries and a number of idiomatic expressions)<sup>30</sup>. The rite of *dziady* [*the forefathers' eve*], which is so popular in Belarus, Polesye and Ukraine, is a symbolic form of satisfying the needs of the ancestors (such as, primarily, food, drink and warming their souls)<sup>31</sup>. By means of a simple transfer of symbols, giving food to wandering beggars was regarded to be a form of feeding the dead.

These deep layers of traditional culture may have survived in modern culture through some artistic atavisms. It would explain the high position of the wander-

<sup>28</sup> Cf.: P. Grochowski, *Dziady...*, pp. 19–67.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20. Cf. also P. Dahlig, *op. cit.*, pp. 415–428; K. Mikhaylova, *Dziad wędrowny jako postać mediacyjna...*, pp. 101–108.

<sup>30</sup> Piotr Grochowski, *Dziady...*, p. 19.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 27.



ing beggars' song in the hierarchy of the genres of songs performed by modern musicians.

In terms of the genology of the wandering beggars' song, the author of this text leans towards its broad and multi-genre understanding. Essentially, it is not a single genre but a very heterogenous cluster of genres. They include religious songs, songs about saints, ballads, sung prayers, funeral songs, songs about the end of the world, the decline of morality, Marian songs, songs about miracles and a large group of songs about historical events<sup>32</sup>. Sometimes, they also include songs about current events<sup>33</sup> and, finally, those concerned with the condition of the beggars' profession<sup>34</sup>. The most convincing criterion for determining the typology of the wandering beggars' song is the performer himself and the function and intention of the song<sup>35</sup>. As a result, the songs that functioned in the repertoire of the wandering beggars and were related to a specific strategy – the artist's intention towards the recipient (arousing interest and acceptance, commercial activity – prayer services)<sup>36</sup> should be recognized as wandering beggars' songs.

Within our scope of interest, the greatest influence on Polish folk culture (and, indirectly, on modern reconstructions) was exerted by Ukrainian hurdy-gurdy traditions. It was there that professional musicians organised in guilds and fraternities were active; they had a separate system of educating new hurdy-gurdy players<sup>37</sup>, who used a secret language – the so-called “Libyan speech.” The methods of conferring the right to work as a professional hurdy-gurdy player<sup>38</sup> and the clearly defined matters of succession – typically “from father to son”<sup>39</sup> – were ritualized.

Piotr Dahlig writes of the three tiers of hurdy-gurdy song repertoire: religious (psalms, chants, songs about saints, litanies), songs about wars and secular heroes (sometimes based on medieval epic poems) and, finally, humorous songs (e.g. kolomyjkas) intended to amuse the audience<sup>40</sup>. Each performance ended with a prayer for the dead<sup>41</sup>. It could also contain a short pastoral teaching focused on displaying the futility of this world and the need for salvation<sup>42</sup>. The performances were well thought out and adapted to the periods of the liturgical year and its holidays, local customs and specific assignments<sup>43</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. M. Waliński, *Pieśń jarmarczna? Nowiniarska? Ballada?...*, p. 172; P. Grochowski, *Dziady...*, pp. 191–201.

<sup>33</sup> S. Nyrkowski, op. cit.; S. Niebrzegowska, op. cit.; P. Grochowski, *Jarmark tradycji...*, p. 147.

<sup>34</sup> P. Grochowski, *Jarmark tradycji...*, p. 147.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. S. Niebrzegowska, op. cit., p. 623.

<sup>36</sup> Cf.: Piotr Grochowski, *Dziady...*, p. 211.

<sup>37</sup> Z.J. Przerembski, *Z dziejów praktyki lirniczej...*, p. 101.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>40</sup> P. Dahlig, op. cit., p. 428.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 428.

<sup>42</sup> R. Mazur-Hanaj, *Lirnik-dziad i jego pieśni...*, p. 411.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

What is interesting within the scope of the issues discussed in this article are the most recent Ukrainian publications. For instance, the 2002 monographic collection of materials *Pieśni lirnicze z Polesia* [*Hurdy-gurdy songs from Polesye*] includes, among others, the musical and vocal repertoire of Ivan Vlasyuk (1908–1991), who was the last typical representative of the authentic hurdy-gurdy tradition in Ukraine<sup>44</sup>. His songs were recorded onto an audio tape in the years 1968–1969. The monograph consists of 21 detailed musical transcriptions of hurdy-gurdy pieces, including 17 from the repertoire of Ivan Vlasyuk<sup>45</sup>. It contains a surprising number of humorous songs (although it also features religious songs, such as this region's most famous song about the Pochayiv Mother of God). These transcriptions are particularly valuable as they provide a detailed representation of both the hurdy-gurdy and the vocal part, with emphasis on ornamentation (numerous musical flourishes) and interstrophic variants of the melody. The full lyrics of the songs were also written down separately (the longest has 35 verses).

The ethnomusicologist Victoriya Yarmola provides interesting biographical information about Ivan Vlasyuk in addition to three transcriptions of psalms in his performance (they include two psalms about Saint Nicholas)<sup>46</sup>. The author stresses the fact that, initially, Ivan Vlasyuk's repertoire consisted primarily of religious pieces, and it was only later that he added other folk songs – mostly humorous, hence more appealing to the audience and the musician himself<sup>47</sup>.

As we move on to a discussion of the repertoire of songs performed in Poland in recent decades, it should be stressed that the wandering beggars' songs started to be performed in the secondary artistic circulation (as a distinct phenomenon) at the beginning of the 1990s (it only happened occasionally before that time)<sup>48</sup>. The main role in this was played by reconstructive groups, chiefly *Bractwo Ubo-*

<sup>44</sup> Лірницькі пісні з Полісся. Матеріали до вивчення лірницької традиції. Записи впорядкування і примітки Олексія Ошуркевича. Нотні приклади Юрія Рибак, Рівне 2002. [Lirnyts'ki pisni z Polissya. Materialy do vyvchennya lirnyts'koyi tradytsiyi. Zapysy vporядkuvannya i prymitky Oleksiya Oshurkevycha. Notni pryklady Yuriya Rybaka, Rivne 2002.]. Source: [http://conservatory.lviv.ua/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/pblk-6\\_lirnycki-pisni.pdf](http://conservatory.lviv.ua/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/pblk-6_lirnycki-pisni.pdf) [access: 22.09.2020].

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 47–92.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Вікторія Ярмола, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8993-6662>, МАНДРІВНІ МУЗИКАНТИ ЗАХІДНОГО ПОЛІССЯ (Штрихи до портрета лірника Івана Власюка). [Viktoriya Yarmola, MANDRIVNI MUZYKANTY ZAKHIDNOHO POLISSYA (Shtrykhy do portreta lirnyka Ivana Vlasyuka)]. Source: [http://conservatory.lviv.ua/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/em-15\\_03-yarmola.pdf](http://conservatory.lviv.ua/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/em-15_03-yarmola.pdf) [access: 22.09.2020].

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>48</sup> A good example of that is the repertoire and folk music stylisation of the *Syrbacy* ensemble (known as the first Polish folk ensemble). Among others, *Syrbacy* presented the wandering beggars' songs but in a humorous version (*country* music stylisation) with the use of the hurdy-gurdy as well as the tambourine, musical saw, devil's violin and burczybas.

gich [Fraternity of the Poor]<sup>49</sup> and the singers associated with *Fundacja "Muzyka Kresów"* [The "Music of the Eastern Borderlands" Foundation]. The musical ensembles that were created in later years should also be named: *Muzykanci*<sup>50</sup>, *Kapela Brodów*, *Ket Jo Barat*, *Kapela Hałasów*. Particularly important bards and popularisers of this genre in Poland include: Remigiusz Mazur-Hanaj, Agata Harz, Jacek Hałas, Witold and Anna Broda, Janusz Prusinowski, Maciej Ci-erliński, Maciej Harna, Tomasz Drozdek, Barbara Wilińska. Remigiusz Mazur-Hanaj, the most active promoter of this community, was also the organiser of a number of projects popularising the wandering beggars' songs and the practice of hurdy-gurdy playing<sup>51</sup>.



Fig. 3. Concert "Lira Wschodu i Zachodu" [Hurdy-gurdy of the East and West]. Narol 2013

The artistic profiles of particular contemporary Polish hurdy-gurdy players deserve separate studies<sup>52</sup>. Even though each one of them is an independent artist,

<sup>49</sup> *Bractwo Ubogich*, founded in 1992, is the first Polish ensemble consisting of urban singers and musicians, who tried to perform Polish folk music *in crudo*, without any stylisation. The main idea behind the ensemble was to get to know Polish folk music and its unique mannerisms directly from folk artists (often through archival recordings), which contributed to the creation of this original style of music.

<sup>50</sup> The *Muzykanci* ensemble won many Polish and foreign festivals, including *Folkowy Fonogram Roku 1999*.

<sup>51</sup> Such as *Tabor Lirnicki* (2013) or the "Lira Wschodu i Zachodu" concert in Narol (2013).

<sup>52</sup> Jacek Hałas is one of the most famous and successful contemporary Polish hurdy-gurdy players; he is a musician, dancer and co-founder of many ensembles, such as: *Bractwo Ubogich*, *Muzykanci*, *Ket Jo Barat*, *Lautari*, *Nomadzi Kultury* and the *Trubadurzy Chrystusa Pana* project (with *Schola Teatru Węgałty*). He is also the founder of *Poznański Dom Tańca*. He recorded two albums with the wandering beggars' songs – Cf.: Jacek Hałas, *Pieśni dziadowskie* (studio material,

to a large extent they make up a single community (they work towards similar goals, create similar artistic image, reconstruct the repertoire of songs and the techniques of playing), collaborate, undertake joint projects, conduct teaching activity and organise workshops together<sup>53</sup>.

Major events for this community include Tabory Lirnickie in Szczeczeszyn and Narol, the creation of the Academy of Wandering Musicians and the concert “Lira Wschodu i Zachodu” [“The hurdy-gurdy of East and West”]<sup>54</sup>. The wandering beggars’ songs accompanied the multiple editions of the “Pieśń naszych Korzeni” [“Song of our Roots”] Festival in Jarosław<sup>55</sup>. Tabory Domu Tańca<sup>56</sup> were also a natural opportunity for performing them<sup>57</sup>. Some of the above-mentioned projects were international in scope as they were attended by hurdy-gurdy players from Ukraine, Hungary, Germany and Spain<sup>58</sup>. The international projects also include “Polsko-ukraińskie spotkanie lirników i kobziarzy” [“Polish and Ukrainian meeting of hurdy-gurdy and kobza players”] organized as part of “Muzyczna Scena Tradycji” [“Scene of Musical Traditions”] by Polskie Radio<sup>59</sup>. For historical reasons, the relationship between Polish and Ukrainian hurdy-gurdy players has always been unique.

It is also worth asking the question: Is the traditional repertoire of the wandering beggars’ songs reflected in the performances of the contemporary hurdy-gurdy players?<sup>60</sup> The answer to this question must be multifaceted.

unreleased), CD and Jacek Hałas n.d., *Zegar bije. Starodawne pieśni o marnościach tego świata, o śmierci i wędrowaniu dusz, ku przestrodze, zadumie i pokrzepieniu wyśpiewane*, CD, Nomadzi Kultury. Maciej Cierliński is another virtuoso of the hurdy-gurdy. Apart from his own projects, he recorded albums with a number of famous ensembles, including Kapela ze wsi Warszawa and Hey (*MTV Unplugged*, 2007).

<sup>53</sup> The aforementioned projects also include several editions of Tabor Tańca (Cf. the description of successive editions on the website: <http://www.domtanca.art.pl/> [access: 12.10.2019]) and more than twenty editions of the “Pieśń Naszych Korzeni” Festival in Jarosław.

<sup>54</sup> Akademia Muzyków Wędrownych is a continuation of the idea of Tabor Lirnicki, which took place in Szczeczeszyn in 2008 (audio and video recordings from these events in the private collection of the Author).

<sup>55</sup> Many Polish hurdy-gurdy players performed there both officially and unofficially (in the so-called club). For instance, a peculiar street happening took place during the last edition of the “Pieśń Naszych Korzeni” Festival: singing the wandering beggars’ songs combined with express workshops – teaching melody, distributing stylised copies of song lyrics (in paper rolls), encouraging participants to sing, etc. (recording in the private collection of the Author).

<sup>56</sup> [A series of workshops, lectures and concerts dedicated to folk music.]

<sup>57</sup> Cf. the description of several editions of Tabor Tańca on the website; source: <http://www.domtanca.art.pl/> [access: 12.10.2019].

<sup>58</sup> Audio and video recordings of Akademia Muzyków Wędrownych [Academy of Wandering Musicians] and the “Lira Wschodu i Zachodu” concert in the Author’s private collection.

<sup>59</sup> Cf.: “Polsko-ukraińskie spotkanie lirników i kobziarzy.” Source: <https://www.polskieradio.pl/8/2771/Artykul/794487,Polskoukraińskie-spotkanie-lirnikow-i-kobziarzy-zobacz-wideo> [access: 1.05.2020].

<sup>60</sup> A separate issue, which is not analysed in this article, is the repertoire of the wandering beggars’ songs performed at contemporary festivals of folklore by authentic depositaries of the tradition.

Firstly, the traditional strategies and functions of the wandering beggars' songs are now limited to the artistic, aesthetic and, oftentimes, socializing function – these are dominant. Secondly, due to the unique nature of the authentic recordings of wandering beggars, modern performers are looking for any kind of archival repertoire that could be described as characteristic for them. The most commonly used sources include second-hand materials – printed, not in the form of recordings. Therefore, the subject of the wandering beggars' songs is as unique as it is whimsical and burdened with peculiar mythologisation. The attitudes of a number of musicians and participants of the “hurdy-gurdy subculture” reveal their desire to create a “mythology” around the figure of the wandering beggar; they are willing to treat that character as the moral model, idealise it and identify as “the prophetic hurdy-gurdy player”.

This affects the choices of the vocal (less often instrumental) repertoire. The preferred songs include songs about saints<sup>61</sup>, ballads, some funeral songs, songs about the end of the world and the decline of morals, a selection of Marian songs, songs about miracles and a large group of songs about historic events. Some performers value apocalyptic songs<sup>62</sup>, including those with a moralizing function<sup>63</sup>. In somewhat simplified terms, what is dominant is the desire to tell stories that will appeal to the audience with their contents, poetics, unusual subject matter, unexpected turns of events and the underlying message. The music and accompaniment of a peculiar instrument are essential as they help the audience with the reception of long pieces. Importantly, the issues they raise are recognized by contemporary performers as timeless and equally important today. The songs about the end of the world resonate with us differently in the age of the coronavirus pandemic than at a time of *prosperity*. As such, one can predict that they will be highly successful in the near future.

The strictly religious songs are performed much less often, while specific prayers – almost never. This proves the previously mentioned change in the scope and hierarchy of the functions of the wandering beggars' songs that are performed today. The presented songs are not adjusted to the periods of the liturgical year but constitute a pre-arranged programme that is repeated at concerts. There is not much room for improvisation (in a general sense; instrumental improvisation is still present). The competence of performers has also changed. They are often

<sup>61</sup> Cf. album by *Kapela Brodów* “Pieśni do Świętych Pańskich.”

<sup>62</sup> Cf. particularly the wandering beggars' ballad from the Lublin Voivodeship – *Posłuchajże wierny ludu* (no. 17), registered on the album: *Muzykanci*, Jan Słowiński Record Label, Zakopane – Kraków 1999/2000, catalogue number JSCD-001, CD, and the song about the author of *Święty Michał trąbką trąbi*, in the performance of Jacek Hałas (recording of a concert in the private collection of the Author).

<sup>63</sup> For example, Jacek Hałas' album *Pieśni dziadowskie* (studio material, unreleased but presented at many concerts) features the following songs: *Przyjechał ksiądz do chorego*; *Na cmentarzu za kościołem wadziła się dusza z ciałem*; *Pieśń o św. Rozalii*; *Onego czasu w jednej krainie*.

virtuosos of their instruments but not religious or moral authority figures. Even though the performances are often held at places of worship<sup>64</sup>, preaching and pastoral teaching are not common practice – unless they are understood as a play on tradition or a dramatization. In general, it can be said that this field, which is inspired by folk tradition, has become secularized (although clerics do show interest in it, making it possible to perform in places of worship). Meanwhile, the functions that used to be carried out by wandering beggars (including what is today known as evangelization and/or money collection)<sup>65</sup> are handled differently<sup>66</sup>.

In the case of particular performances of the wandering beggars' songs, the intention of the majority of the previously mentioned artists is to preserve their general character by faithfully reproducing their lyrics and melody. The only added element is the accompaniment of the hurdy-gurdy, which was not present in the original sources or we have little knowledge of it (due to the lack of authentic recordings). The interference of contemporary performers is limited to, among others, shortening the lengthy lyrics to several selected verses, limiting, changing or eliminating non-standard pronunciation and giving titles to traditional pieces. The basic intent is to adjust the songs to the capabilities of the contemporary audience (it would be impossible to perform long pieces in a concert setting)<sup>67</sup>. Tampering with the traditional musical layer of the songs is less common<sup>68</sup>. There are also occasional instances of the use of contrafactum – setting traditional texts to other (often culturally distant) traditional melodies<sup>69</sup>.

What is often important in the case of apocalyptic songs is not only the general idea of the piece but also particular motifs, which, once introduced to the contemporary performing context, may almost spontaneously become relevant again. The virus is but one of the possible disasters that could strike us. The old

<sup>64</sup> Examples of that include the numerous concerts of *Bractwo Ubogich*, Jacek Hałas, Remigiusz Mazur-Hanaj, Agata Harz, Witold and Anna Broda, the “Lira Wschodu i Zachodu” concert in Narol (2013) and several other events organised as part of Tabor Lirnicki (2013).

<sup>65</sup> An interesting example of that, which harks back to the authentic wandering beggars' tradition, is the sung money collection at the Lublin Cemetery in Lipowa street, which has been held for several years on All Saints' Day or All Souls' Day.

<sup>66</sup> E.g. a formal request for a mass for a deceased relative.

<sup>67</sup> An example of that is the song *Posłuchajże wierny ludu*, registered on the *Muzykanci* album, Jan Słowiński Record Label, Zakopane – Kraków 1999/2000, catalogue number JSCD-001, CD. Cf. first version of this piece (lyrics and score) recorded in: J. Adamowski, *Tam na Podlasiu. Pieśni ludowe z gminy Borki i ich wykonawcy*, Gminny Ośrodek Kultury Borki, Lublin 1994, pp. 74–75.

<sup>68</sup> The wandering beggars' songs are also part of the repertoire of folk ensembles and stand-up comedy groups (which is not a subject of this study). In those cases, they are specially selected and arranged. One of the most performed and recorded pieces is the moralizing song about a woman who killed her child; it is purportedly a wandering beggar's song. Cf. the recording on an album by the *Się Gra* ensemble, “Się Gra,” MTJ Record Label 1999, catalogue number 10100, CD.

<sup>69</sup> An example of that is the piece *Przyjechał ksiądz do chorego*, registered on Jacek Hałas' album *Pieśni dziadowskie* (studio material, unreleased but presented at many concerts).

notion of the “plagues of Egypt” is revived. The axis of the conflict runs in line with the opposition of *sacrum – profanum*; faith – atheism; ecology – industrialization. The development of technology can also be judged negatively when juxtaposed with broadly defined tradition and the social norms that are set within it. The anonymous moraliser (personified as a present-day hurdy-gurdy player) is critical of the wide array of current cultural practices and social relations. Is the following song, written down in Krasew (Lublin Voivodeship) not particularly relevant in this context? It cannot be a coincidence that is so eagerly performed by modern artists:

[...]

Sybilija mówi święta, [Thus says the Holy Sybil:]  
 żyć będziemy jak zwierzęta, [we will live like animals;]  
 o Bogu też zapomnimy, [we will forget about God,]  
 swoje dusze potępimy. [and doom our souls to damnation.]

Szatan dusze opanuje [Satan will take hold of our souls]  
 i królestwo nam zrujnuje, [and lay waste to our kingdom;]  
 będziem płakać lamentować, [we will cry and lament,]  
 Bóg nie raczy nam darować. [but God will not forgive us.]

Weźmy sobie do pamięci, [Let us consider]  
 czy nie wszystko nam się święci: [if not everything is holy:]  
 maszyny różne i techniki, [all the machines and technology]  
 różne mody i wybryki. [the fashion and excess.]

Panny w stroju brzydkiej mody, [Young ladies, indecently clothed,]  
 kosmetyki dla urody, [use cosmetics for their beauty;]  
 że grzech to się nie przejmują, [they do not care it is a sin]  
 grzeszne ciała pokazują. [and expose their sinful bodies.]

[...]

Syn gdy ojca dziś zobaczy, [When son sees his father today,]  
 to przywitać go nie raczy, [he will not think to greet him;]  
 ojciec starzec obnażony, [the father is bare and old]  
 a syn jego wystrojony. [while his son is stylishly dressed.]

Ile matek oplakuje, [So many mothers weep]  
 ze ich dziecko nie szanuje [because their children do not respect them]  
 i kawałka chleba pragnie, [and yearn for a piece of bread;]  
 będziesz dziecko w piekle na dnie. [child, you shall burn in the depths of hell.]

[...]

Powstaną na świecie wojny, [The world will be at war,]  
 naród będzie niespokojny, [and the people will know no rest;]  
 syn do walki z ojcem stanie, [son will fight his own father]  
 będzie straszne krwi rozlanie. [and the bloodshed will be great.]

Dżuma ludzi powyniszcza, [The plague will consume humanity,]  
 pozostaną same zgliszcza, [and only ruins will remain;]

nie ma ojca nie ma brata, [once there is no father or brother,]  
wówczas będzie koniec świata. [the end of the world will come.]

[...]

Posłuchajcie chrześcijanie, [Harken, Christians,]  
co się zatem z nami stanie, [to what will happen to us,]  
bo nastaną ciężkie lata [for hard times are coming,]  
i nadejdzie koniec świata. [...] <sup>70</sup> [and the end of the world is nigh.]

It is worth adding that in the case of the wandering beggars' songs, there is a lot of room for new creations and reconstruction of the material predominantly because we do not know how the repertoire was presented exactly – the recordings we have at our disposal do not feature genuine wandering beggars or hurdy-gurdy players but selected depositaries of the tradition, who reproduce the songs in the way they remember them<sup>71</sup>.

As a result, the contemporary performers use a repertoire that is rarely presented publicly, especially in mainstream media. It was procured from archives, brought out of hiding, rescued from oblivion, and it bears the marks of anachronism. Hence it is seen as new, valuable, attractive.

The contemporary art of hurdy-gurdy playing has its characteristic features and manifests itself in the form of dedicated record labels, festivals, concerts, competitions for the best wandering beggars' song and violin-making workshops. They are often financed by grants, ministerial projects, etc.<sup>72</sup> There is also the "Academy of Wandering Musicians"<sup>73</sup> – the participants of this movement fulfil themselves in many different fields – for instance in the vocal, instrumental and literary sphere. The wandering beggars' songs are also making a return as a form of original literary activity<sup>74</sup>. For many members of this community, it is a way of life, earning a living or spending free time and pursuing their own passions.

The popularity of the new song and, more broadly, the "wandering beggars' subculture"<sup>75</sup> prompts us to wonder why such an unusual model is so attractive

<sup>70</sup> J. Adamowski, *Tam na Podlasiu...*, pp. 74–75.

<sup>71</sup> It is worth adding that a large number of wandering beggars' songs introduced to contemporary circulation (for instance by "Kapela Brodów") come from Polish phonographic archives. An example of that is the album by *Kapela Brodów* "Pieśni i melodie na rozmaite święta", 2001, which features, among others, musical material taken from the Archive of Religious Folk Music of the Department of Ethnomusicology and Hymnology of the the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. the project of constructing the "Pilgrim" hurdy-gurdy as part of the programme "Szkoła mistrzów instrumentów ludowych" ["School of Folk Instrument Masters"]. Creators: Stanisław Nogaj, Małgorzata "Czarli" Bajka.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. description of the project: <https://folk24.pl/wiesci/lirnicy-przybywajcie/>.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. competition for a "new wandering beggars' song" and its results compiled in the anthology: R. Mazur-Hanaj, *Za dziada w super wróbla przemienionego. Antologia nowej pieśni dzia-dowskiej*, ed. R. Mazur-Hanaj, J. Jarco, In Crudo, Milanówek – Szczecbrzeszyn – Narol 2013.

<sup>75</sup> The term "subculture" is not used here in a strictly sociological understanding.



to contemporary performers. This question is particularly legitimate as a certain reversal of the system of values takes place here: what is commonly least valued – that is the sphere connected with begging – is deemed to be important and valuable (although not entirely, of course).



**Fig. 4.** Participants of the Academy of Wandering Musicians, Narol 2013

It should be acknowledged that the contemporary “wandering beggars’ movement” functions within a broader phenomenon of folklorism, with all of the consequences of that<sup>76</sup>. It is also significant that contemporary performers choose only some of the elements from the authentic wandering beggars’ tradition while they leave others out. What is primarily reconstructed (or created in accordance with a specific pattern) are the songs. Secondly, it should be noted that contemporary performers are not inspired by folk tradition but, in fact, a number of different traditions (mainly of the Eastern Borderlands of Poland). Thirdly, it is only to a certain extent that this tradition has been rediscovered; it has, largely, been invented anew<sup>77</sup>. In this case, these two cultural paradigms interpenetrate. They should be placed in a broader perspective of postmodern culture.

Are we dealing merely with superficial inspiration or, rather, with reaching for deep, archetypal structures and layers of culture represented by the tradi-

<sup>76</sup> Read more about the broader category of folklorism – a term popularized by, among others, Józef Burszta in e.g.: J. Burszta, *Kultura ludowa – folklorizm – kultura narodowa*, “Kultura i Społeczeństwo” 1969, no. 4, pp. 69–90.

<sup>77</sup> With reference to discovered and invented tradition cf.: E. Hobsbawm, *Inventing traditions*, [in:] *The invention of tradition*, ed. E. Hobsbawm, T. Ranger, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1983; and M. Trębaczewska, *Między folklorem a folkiem. Muzyczna konstrukcja nowych tradycji we współczesnej Polsce*, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2011, p. 38.

tional folk culture? Undoubtedly, a creative reconstruction of this peculiar “new tradition” is taking place. It is surely shaped by contemporary intellectual circles. The countercultural element of “artistic contrariness” towards the pop-cultural content promoted in the media is also clearly visible.

The way in which the modern wandering beggars’ songs are used often resembles minimal art (solo voice with hurdy-gurdy accompaniment) and may be seen, to a certain extent, as countercultural – it breaks the contemporary mainstream aesthetics. Important musical and performing parameters of this material include ametricity (*ad libitum* performance), slow tempos and a simple accompaniment based on a drone and the melody that is being played. In Poland (unlike in Hungary), the hurdy-gurdy is very rarely used to accompany a dance. Sometimes, the melody played on the hurdy-gurdy is not played in unison with the vocals but remains in the interval of, for example, a third in relation to the melody sung by the singer. We are also observing different choices with regard to repertoire – hurdy-gurdy transcriptions of classical music, including polyphony and traditional polyphonic music<sup>78</sup>; these issues are, however, not the main subject of this study. In some projects, the hurdy-gurdy is also a desirable addition to different musical styles and the repertoires of well-known ensembles<sup>79</sup>.



**Fig. 5.** Stanisław Wyżykowski from Haczow and his student Stanisław Nogaj

<sup>78</sup> Cf., e.g., the virtuoso performances of Matthias Loibner. Source: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QHmML7bu-iM&index=12&list=RD9\\_EFBHtEiio](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QHmML7bu-iM&index=12&list=RD9_EFBHtEiio) [access: 11.05.2019]. He organised workshops as part of Tabor Lirnicki in Narol in 2013.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Maciek Cierliński’s presentations on an album of the “Hey” rock band, *MTV Unplugged* (2007). This tendency is also observed outside of Poland. The hurdy-gurdy was used by, among others, Sting in one of his projects.

Both in traditional folk culture (especially of the Eastern parts of the Republic of Poland where the Orthodox faith was dominant) and today (regardless of spatial delimitation), the hurdy-gurdy is the main symbolic attribute of the wandering beggars' song, and hence a characteristic feature of the genre. It is worth emphasizing that it has now become a nearly indispensable musical component of the genre, regardless of the actual popularity of the instrument in the folk music of particular regions. Its use is one of the most basic strategies employed by contemporary performers.

It should be added that the expansion of the wandering beggars' songs is also possible owing to the efforts of Polish violin-makers<sup>80</sup>, who provide the musicians with instruments. They are then effectively used by the performers in their artistic activity.



**Fig. 6.** Lira Pielgrzymna (Pilgrim)

The hurdy-gurdy players are, above all, people of the road – this archetype manifests itself both in folk tradition, song lyrics and in the stories of particular musicians. The wandering “nomad of culture” achieves high status as the embodiment of total freedom, and the construction of the “Pilgrim” hurdy-gurdy became the reason for undertaking a walking journey from Poland to Santiago de Compostela<sup>81</sup>.

<sup>80</sup> Some of the most active Polish violin-makers include Stanisław Wyżykowski from Haczów and his student Stanisław Nogaj from Stara Wieś. Cf. S. Wyżykowski, *Lirnik z Haczowa*, Nonparel, Krosno 2000.

<sup>81</sup> What I mean here are two examples of artistic projects combined with a way of life: one by Jacek Hałas, who travels across Europe with his family, playing, singing and dancing, and the

These types of stories make us reflect on the values that, according to many researchers, constitute the core of each culture. The world of modern beliefs, ideas and values is a subject for a separate sociological or religious study. It is very difficult to arbitrarily determine, especially in postmodern culture, what individual people believe in – particularly artists. In spite of the differences in the values they subscribe to, many contemporary musicians, not unlike the famous *beguny*, believe that it is a good idea to spend their lives on the road. In that, they became similar to the wandering beggars/hurdy-gurdy players, who, at some point in time, suddenly disappeared from the European roads. Just like them, although in slightly different circumstances, they enrich our world and let us see many everyday problems in a different light. They help us to establish a proper hierarchy of values, since becoming immersed in tradition makes it easier to properly evaluate the human condition – particularly in the modern world, which is being manipulated at so many different levels.

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## **Emisariusze dziadowskiej tradycji – z problematyki lirniczej – przeszłość i terażniejszość**

### **Abstrakt**

Temat pieśni dziadowskich i ich funkcjonowania w kulturze był już wielokrotnie podejmowany w polskiej folklorystyce i w etnomuzykologii. W sensie praktycznym wydawałoby się, że pieśń dziadowska to temat historyczny – dawno zamknięty, podobnie jak lirnictwo – jeden z jej najciekawszych przejawów. A jednak pieśni lirników powracają dzisiaj z wielką siłą w wykonaniu amatorskich i profesjonalnych muzyków. Obserwujemy też zjawisko konsolidacji muzyków, nie tylko w określone zespoły, ale i szersze projekty (festiwale, akademie, spotkania, zloty lirników). Autor przedstawia syntetyczny opis tradycji lirniczej, instrumentu (liry korbowej), repertuaru pieśniewego oraz współczesnych rekonstrukcji tych tradycji, podejmowanych przez wybrane środowiska.

**Słowa kluczowe:** pieśni dziadowskie, lirnik, lira korbowa, Akademia Muzyków Wędrownych.