

In my father's footsteps ~ finding my way along the unmarked path of a long-lost musical journey



In 2009, I attended 'A Cape Breton Story of Ukrainian Dance: From Village to Stage' at the Cape Breton Art Gallery in Sydney, Nova Scotia. The exhibition, curated by Dr. Marcia Ostashewski, included details about my father's connection with Cape Breton's Ukrainian community, from his arrival in Sydney in 1939 until his departure in 1942, when he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Army.

Ballet Master Pavlo Romanovich Yavorsky ~ my father ~ had performed and taught Ukrainian dance for years, and this is what he continued to do upon his arrival in Cape Breton. In his memoirs*, he wrote, "July 6, 1939: I gave my first lecture in the Catholic community's parish hall ~ it went very well. The next day, I began the teaching of Ukrainian dances... I began teaching Ukrainian school... I held concerts in local halls..."

*Ref: '1938-39 ... My Diary from Travels with artist Vasile Avramenko' ~ Journal entries translated by Dr. D. A. Yavorska, 2007

I was aware of my father's history as a teacher of Ukrainian dance. But what I did not know was that he also played music, wrote music, taught music: this I learned in conversation with Whitney Pier resident John Huk at the 2009 exhibition. A beloved student of my father's in his three years on Cape Breton Island, John provided many special artifacts for the exhibition — including a violin which, he told me, my father had given him and had taught him to play. (*I had no idea my father could play the violin! John said he had taught himself.*) There was also a large sheaf of sheet music, written in my father's hand. Following the exhibition, John Huk donated the sheet music, among many other important artifacts, to The Beaton Institute at CBU.

Fast-forward to March 2015: Dr. Marcia Ostashewski, Canada Research Chair in Communities and Cultures and Assistant Professor of Ethnomusicology at Cape Breton University, arranged with Beaton Institute Archivist Jane Arnold to provide me with digital files of my father's sheet music. I had embarked on a serious study of the violin just a few years ago (a dozen years after my father's passing) and was very moved by being given access to 'lost' music with such a profoundly personal connection.

Marcia next told me of her plan to record a collection of Cape Breton music of significance to the Ukrainian population on the island; for this project, she asked me to select a few of my father's pieces, and to learn them for the recording, slated for this summer. I admit to being overwhelmed by this request: a violin student for just over five years, I do not consider myself a fully-fledged musician yet, although I am a member of an orchestra whose repertoire includes challenging music from Vivaldi and Bach to Handel's *Messiah*. Yet the opportunity to return to Cape Breton, where my father came as a young man and found such enthusiasm for his teaching, to record the music he himself chose to present in concert, to play the music he himself transcribed by hand ~ this is truly, for me, an opportunity of a lifetime. For this, I would like to thank **John Huk** of Sydney, Nova Scotia, **Dr. Marcia Ostashewski** of Cape Breton University, **Jane Arnold** of The Beaton Institute, recording technician **Christopher Jones**, my family **Dr. Donna Anna Yavorska** and **Andrij Ronish** for assistance with references and lyrics, and, most of all, my violin teacher, **Dini Odynski Westman** of Stratford, Ontario.

What follows is the 'evolutionary progress' of delving into my four chosen pieces.

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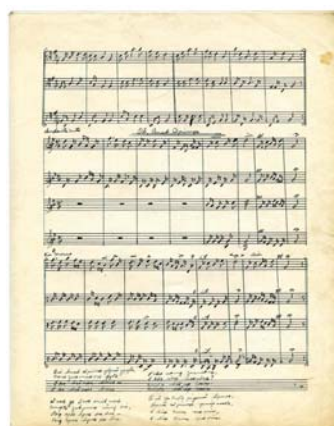
'Lullabye'



'Not The Wind'



'Alas, The Soldier Has Fallen'



'My Beloved, Beautiful Orchard'



1 • Selecting the Pieces

Out of more than 50 files of my father's sheet music, I chose these four for their haunting melodies (which I played first on the piano) and dream-like quality.

2 • Identifying the Pieces

The origins/composers of the pieces were not marked on the sheet music. I received help from Andrij Ronish, my brother-in-law, who consulted <http://www.pisni.org.ua>, among several others, in search of reference information. Of these, only 'The Soldier' song could be found, at <http://www.pisni.org.ua/songs/912982.html>

3 • Studying the Music

Each piece required close study, first to establish the key signature and time signature; next, to identify any markings (e.g., bow direction, slurs, etc.) specific to the violin. Some pieces did not indicate slurs, which are essential to deciding which notes should be connected (on a single bow direction) and which should be played separately.

Other aspects to consider included the position in which to play certain notes or sequences, plus whether other elements (such as harmonics) might contribute an expressive quality to the musical line. Yet another consideration was whether to select one of the alternate versions (in 'Not The Wind', there are three) or hold to the first melody as written; and a couple of pieces seemed to have added musical lines that perhaps represented transitions inserted into a dance programme, changing the tempo and even spirit of the piece.

With my violin teacher, Dini Odyński Westman, we discussed all these elements and more, with the overall goal of remaining as true to the music, the way my father had transcribed it, as possible.

'Not The Wind'



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This sheet music was hand-written circa 1920s-1930s by Pavlo Romanovich Yavorsky (1914-1998), Ukrainian Ballet Master, CYMK founder, Saskatchewan Nation-BUILDER and lifelong champion of Ukrainian heritage & culture, coast-to-coast across Canada. Pavlo Yavorsky's hand-written sheet music is archived in the John Huk Collection (MG 21.13) at The Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University, and is provided with their kind permission. For further information, please contact Pavlo's daughter, Daren Roma Yavorsky, Creative Director of The Word & Image Studio: www.wordandimage.ca / e-mail wordandimage@brucelec.com

4 • Marking the Music

Over a period of weeks, my teacher and I worked on the four pieces, experimenting with slurs, bow direction, and changes of position for each.

Also, to make it easier to read the music, I made new copies retaining only the top line and eliminating the other voices and lyrics.



5 • Approaching the Music

In weekly lessons with my teacher, methodically approaching each of the four pieces, we constantly considered both tangibles and intangibles: practical aspects and matters of technique (bow hold, tone improvement) as well as working toward achieving certain tone colours and expressive qualities. It was a painstaking process with a four-month duration, from the time I received the files until the impending recording date on Cape Breton Island ~ and it would have been wonderful to have had much more time!

It involved, essentially, detective work, having to guess at certain details, unsure about some markings, not having the benefit of being able to ask my father to explain his musical message.

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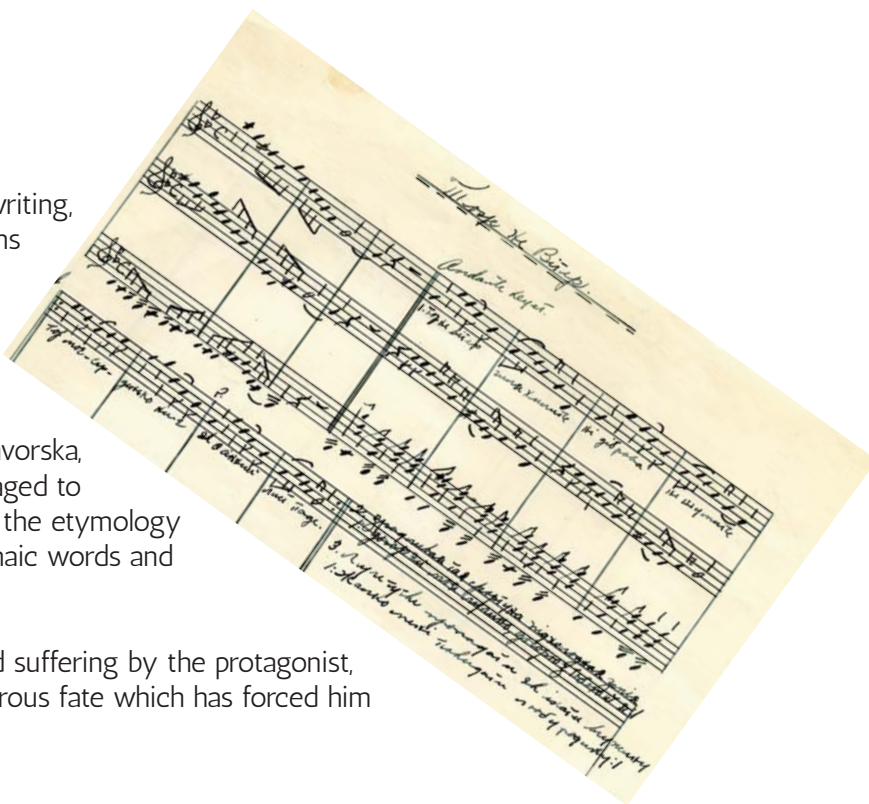
As mentioned earlier, slurs were not obvious, initially ~ but suddenly, several weeks into the process, we 'cracked the code', recognizing an important clue: notes grouped with a beam indicated a slur!

This made all the difference between feeling our way (guessing and hoping to convey the music accurately) and feeling confident, at least of the intended movement within a musical sequence.

I made new copies of the music, deleted our previously added slurs, now understanding exactly where they were meant to take place. Now my teacher's advice was to replace the lyrics, to feel the syllabic connections of notes, and to explore the feelings the music represented.

The lyrics in this song, in my father's hand-writing, were difficult to read in places, the letter forms being unrecognizable here and there, at the ends of words or phrases. It was not possible to compare these hand-written lyrics with a printed version [none found at time of writing], but I received great assistance from my sister, Dr. Donna Anna Yavorska, and brother-in-law, Andrij Ronish, who managed to decipher the illegible bits and also uncovered the etymology of what turned out to be, in some cases, archaic words and turns of phrase.

The song conveys an outpouring of grief and suffering by the protagonist, whose heart is breaking, betrayed by treacherous fate which has forced him to abandon his beloved family.



*"It is not the wind bending the branches nor rustling the grove of trees,
It is my heart withering, like the autumn leaf that falls..."*

Тож не Вітер

1. Тож не вітер гілля хилиць
Ні діброва не шумить

Тож моє серденько ние
Як осінній лист паде

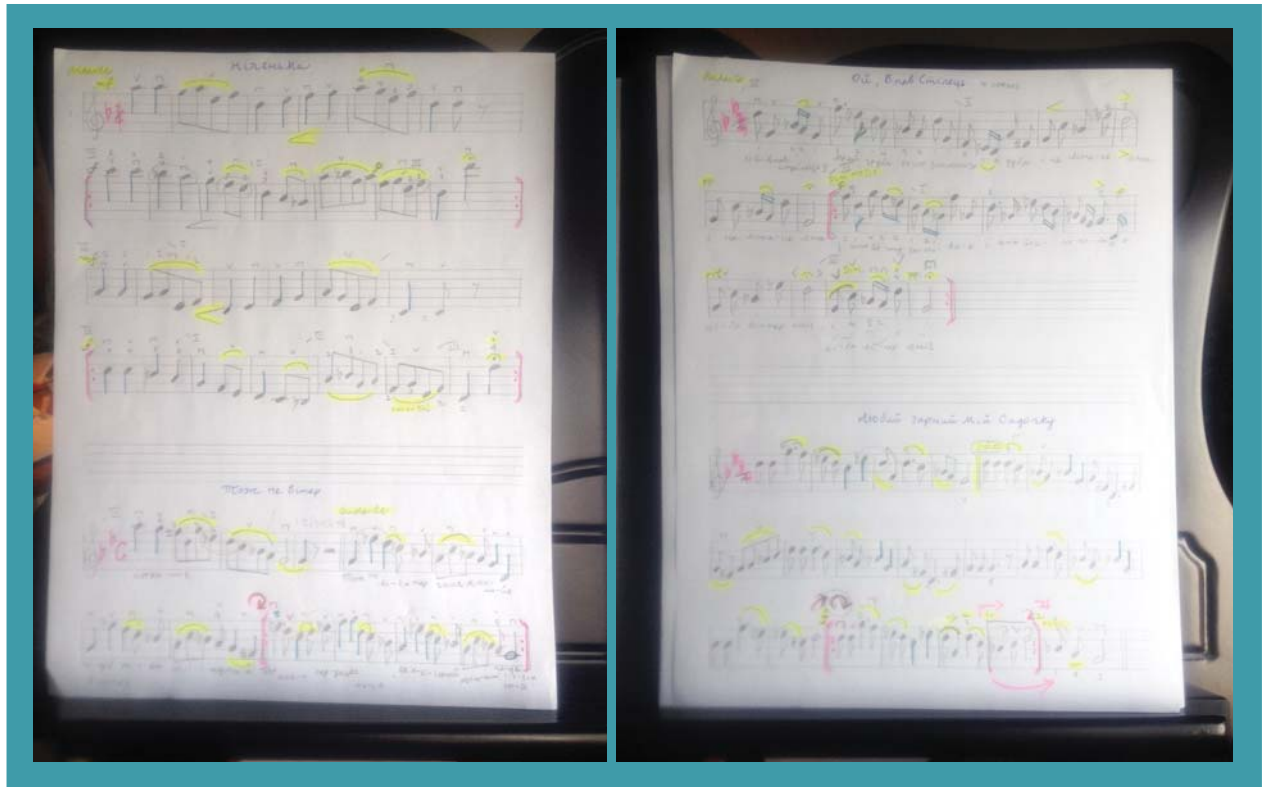
2. Зрадлива та ж фортуна
Підхолодна змія

Догорай моя лучино
Догорю з тобою й я

3. Луче тутке пропадати
Як їхати вчужину

Жалко мені покидати
Любу родину

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6 • Practising the Music

Behind even the simplest melodies are hundreds of complex thoughts and actions, pertaining to technique, expression and everything in between. My violin teacher, Dini Odynski Westman, has helped me in more ways than I could ever describe. With her instruction (and a great deal of practise), it is wonderful to think that I may someday play these pieces, written in my father's hand, to the very best of my ability, in tribute to my parents, who instilled in me not only a love for music, art and literature but the joy of devoting time to these cultural pursuits.

7 • Playing the Music

... for the recording is all that remains, at the Cape Breton University recording studio on July 28, 29 and 30, 2015 (at time of writing, only three weeks away). This I will do in my father's memory, marking in this small way the dedicated contribution of Pavlo Romanovich Yavorsky to Ukrainian arts and culture in Cape Breton and across Canada, and in thanks for the richness of life he so vibrantly, by example, conveyed, provided and left as a legacy to his children.

~ Darene Roma Yavorsky, Kincardine, Ontario, July 2015

A FOOTNOTE ABOUT THE IMAGES OF SHEET MUSIC *transcribed by Pavlo Romanovich Yavorsky* INCLUDED HERE

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