

INTERVIEW WITH IGOR HORKÓW

[transcript of the conversation was machine translated]

John Beauchamp (0:07 - 0:23)

Here we go. Could you introduce yourself, please?

Igor Horków (0:24 - 0:30)

Igor Horków, Union of Ukrainians in Poland, Przemyśl Branch and Ukrainian House in Przemyśl, Narodny Dim.

John Beauchamp (0:32 - 0:44)

Please start by telling us a little bit about the history of the house - one hundred and twenty years, there's a bit of that and generally a lot has happened here over the years.

Igor Horków (0:46 - 16:56)

Indeed, this year, on 1 November, we will celebrate the one hundred and twentieth anniversary of the Narodny Dim, or Ukrainian House, in Przemyśl. This is a very interesting story, but it actually began not in 1904, but around the middle of the 19th century. It was a time when serfdom was abolished in this part of Europe and people were starting to have a bit more leisure time. They didn't yet have the internet, so they could do useful things and it was during this period that Ukrainian national consciousness was awakening. This was connected, among other things, with singing, which is very important in Ukrainian tradition. There was a bishop here in Przemyśl, Iwan Śnigórski, who understood very well what the Eastern liturgical tradition was about, that it had to be polyphonic singing, very nice, harmonic, extended. I think there was something not quite right about liturgical singing in Przemyśl, so he invited a composer from the Czech Republic, Nanke, to remind or teach Ukrainians, or let's say Ruthenians, or almost political Ukrainians at that time, how to do it in the Orthodox church, to make it good.

After a few years of his work, different people started to come to the Orthodox church in Przemyśl, that is, regardless of nationality, creed or areligion or religion, not so much for the liturgy, but for very good concerts of spiritual music. It was on such a high level. In addition, here in the mid-19th century, in the centre of the city, more or less where the monument to Pope John Paul II now stands, there was a hotel called 'Pod opatrzności', which belonged to the Greek Catholic chapter, and it was such a meeting place for the Ukrainian intelligentsia. This place had a stage and was alive with theatres, various theatrical performances, in which students of the Greek Catholic seminary in Przemyśl very often performed.

One of the composers who wrote music for these performances, for theatrical appearances, was Mykhailo Verbytsky. He was Śnigórski's nephew, and Śnigórski, after the death of Verbytsky's parents, quite early on, took charge of him and invested in his musical and spiritual development. Śnigórski was already a locally known good composer at the time, and wrote music for this very theatre, namely 'Under Providence'. And at some point this coincided with a time when a monk from the monastery of the Basilian Fathers brought a bagpipe, a kind of collection of Taras Shevchenko's poetry, to Przemyśl from Kyiv. In Przemyśl, Shevchenko's poetry appealed to people. It is as if they understood that the

strings Shevchenko plays move them too. This poetry evokes a similar, shall we say, set of feelings. At that time, people became even more convinced that Kyiv is very close to us. So mentally, so culturally, so liturgically, and that it is about even in poetry. Shevchenko describes it and we feel it. Just like people in Kyiv on the Dnieper, we in Przemyśl on the San similarly perceive, interpret and feel it. At one point someone came to Werbycki and said: listen, here is a poem, maybe you could put some music to it. He read the first line, I suppose, maybe I am confabulating a little, where it said Szczenew, Nerwa, Ukraina, Niesława, Niewola. At the same time, in his mind it was Shevchenko's piece, not Czubiński's. He said ok, if it is Shevchenko, I will create music to it. The first public performance of this song "Shchenko, Nerva, Ukraine" took place in the theatre, in the hotel "Under providence" in 1865.

Przemyśl is also an important city for Ukrainian tradition and culture because, in fact, the Ukrainian national anthem was first performed in public in Przemyśl, in the very centre of the city. Similarly, the song mentioned, Verbycki arranged it so well, so integrated it into some kind of Ukrainian nature, that it became very popular. In some localities, this melody was even arranged in such a way that it was played as a wedding march. You can imagine entering an Orthodox church and there's no Mendelssohn march, but there's a song by Verbytsky on words by Czubiński. So it was a very popular song. Moreover, after Shevchenko's death, the first celebrations or days of Shevchenko's remembrance were held precisely in Przemyśl. Not in Kyiv, not in Kaniowa, not in Chernichov, Shevchenko's little homeland, but here in Przemyśl on the San River. Over the years, on 9 and 10 March, both the birthday and the day of Teras Shevchenko's death in Przemyśl, Ukrainian business, Ukrainian schools, boarding schools, dormitories had a day off. It was a very important holiday, not a state holiday, because there was no Ukrainian state then, but in the nature of today's state holidays, where all public institutions have a day off, because there is the National Holiday of the Third of May, the Feast of the Constitution of the Third of May, or Independence Day. This is how the Ukrainian community treated 9-10 March back then. This degree of such awareness, development of political consciousness and such a desire to have a common one-state, to be an independent state formation grew very strongly in Ukrainians.

They began to think about such a framework, let us say the structure of what would take place if Ukraine gained independence. At that time they looked at the Serbian example, the Serbs were building their own folk houses and the Ukrainians decided, ok, there's no point in inventing something new, let's do the same as the Serbs, only in a local version and make it Ukrainian, not Serbian. Late in Przemyśl, very late, because it was only at the end of the 19th century that the Narodny Dim Association was set up, whose aim was precisely to build a Ukrainian House. This also took place late, because here there was a very strong Muscovite movement and people were more Moscow-oriented. Its supporters were mostly middle-aged or older, meaning they were already seasoned politicians. And these pro-Kiev oriented people, they were younger, so at the beginning they were still easily fooled, but as time went by they became older and older, more mature, and basically the Ukrainian House is such a symbolic place, because it is such a final defeat of the Muscovite movement in Przemyśl. At a time when most of the national dhimmi had already been established, in Przemyśl they were only thinking about building it. This is very late, but the construction process itself shows the potential and commitment of the Ukrainian community. In Lviv, the

Narodny Dim took fifteen years to build. In Stryj, Kolomyia, Drohobych it took nine, eleven years each. In Przemyśl it was built in less than a year and a half. This shows the potential of the Ukrainian community at the time, plus the fact that it had an amazing leader, Dr Teofil Kormosz, a doctor of law, who convinced people to build it and finance it with their own funds. Of course they took a loan partly to build it, but they paid it off fairly quickly. At that time it was a real need for such a building in the city centre. At the time it was so contemporary and so well equipped that it was called the Pearl on the San. In addition, it had the largest stage in Przemyśl at the time, so it was very much used by everyone.

The building was a very important cultural institution, which is why, among other things, Ivan Franko performed here, that is, a person, a genius, one of the greatest in the cultural history of Ukrainian science, a man who wrote in several languages basically simultaneously. Salomea Krushelnitskaya, i.e. an opera singer, the most powerful voice at that time, in the world in general, not only here. Lajs Kurbas, i.e. the founder of Ukrainian contemporary theatre from Kharkiv also performed here. There were many different events taking place. Professor Stefan Zabrowarny has published a book entitled From the Chronicle of the National House in Przemyśl (1901-1945). The edition describes the functioning of the Ukrainian House in Przemyśl in the first half of the 20th century. This is the first monograph in principle in Przemyśl that has been written about any building in our city and it is about the Ukrainian House. He found such information in the press of that period that there were even spicy concerts in the Narodny Dom. We don't know what this spiciness consisted of, but I would give big money to see video recordings of these concerts. It must have been happening that the local press at the time referred to it as spicy events. Very often the building was also used by Jews. The Jewish community always had an open door to this hall. Henryk Liberman, a very well-known MP, also rented a room here to meet with his constituents. Life here was very intense and very creative. In addition, when events were organised by Ukrainians, very often half of the audience was not Ukrainian, which means that the House offered the urban community something that was interesting not only for Ukrainians. That's more or less how it worked until 1914. The First World War had begun. In 1918, the First World War ends and the Polish-Ukrainian war for Galicia, or Ukrainian-Polish war for Galicia, in short, whether in this part, that is here Przemyśl, Lviv, whether it would be Ukraine, whether it would be Poland. So in the first stage of this war, the Ukrainians won the Ukrainian statehood, in this old historical part of the city, where the Ukrainian House is located, but then, because of the counter-offensive, Poland reached Lviv and beyond, so the fight by the Ukrainians was lost and the topic of Ukrainian statehood in this period was basically closed.

While very often these younger generations fought among themselves, then after this war, because I imagine it was a very difficult process - yesterday we are shooting at each other, and today we have to live as neighbours - so how to arrange it. Teofil Kormosz was a man who knew how to build not only buildings, but also relationships, so such a special entity was created for contacts between the Polish administration and the Ukrainian community, and somehow they arranged it. After 1921, more or less, life returned to normal here, as far as the Ukrainian House was concerned, so there were still meetings, theatre exhibitions, concerts, a lot of bands rehearsed here, there were various music bands, orchestras - men's, women's, a reading room, a library, too. In parts, there were some things that we don't know were going on here. This is connected with the fact that, apart from the two people I

know from the Ukrainian community, everyone else doesn't seem to have such a Przemyśl pedigree. Of those people who are present in the life of the community, there are only two families with Ukrainian, bourgeois and Przemyśl origins, i.e. people who have lived in Przemyśl from their grandparents. This is the effect of later history. In 1939, another war begins and the San River is the border between the Soviet Union and the Third Reich, and in the first stage of this war, here where we are now, it was the Soviet occupation zone. In 1944-1945, the Ukrainian community in Przemyśl sees that the Soviet Union is winning in this part of Europe, that is, the communists will come to power. People had in their minds what the communists did in Ukraine in the 1930s, i.e. the Great Famine, millions of victims, repression, destruction of the intelligentsia, destruction of Ukrainian tradition. And then quite a few of them decide to flee to Western Europe and further to North America. With them leave those stories that they knew about this building, about the city. This part of the Ukrainian history of the city goes into exile.

The other part is the so-called voluntary resettlement or exchange of population between communist Poland and Soviet Ukraine, which in a nutshell was to make Poland more mono-ethnic, so Ukrainians are displaced to Ukraine and Poles are displaced from Soviet Ukraine to Poland. That's how the exchange was done, the so-called exchange of about half a million people from east to west and the other way round. It was said that this resettlement was voluntary, but the choice was that if you don't go, we will execute you. But it was hard to say openly that there was no choice, and in fact in 1945-1946 in Przemyśl, as far as the Ukrainian community was concerned, there were a dozen or so conscious families left, maybe a few dozen. The rest were either already in Western Europe or North America or Ukraine. Then came 1947 and the decision was made to deport the remnants of the Ukrainian community that had remained in south-eastern Poland as part of Operation Vistula. They were deported from here, from these lands to the north-eastern and western lands of Poland. There was no more "Wisła" action from Przemyśl itself, because there was simply no one to deport. There was no Ukrainian community, and this is very interesting, tragic and, at the same time, very interesting, because when this House was being built, the Ukrainians in Przemyśl said that it was the temple of the resurrection of Ukrainian Ruthenia, that is, the fastest Ukrainian House built in Przemyśl, in Galicia. The most active house, the most beautiful Ukrainian house, the most impressive in this part of Europe. It is also the city about which Ivan Frank wrote in Polish at the beginning of the 20th century, i.e. to the Polish community, and Przemyśl is very important for Ukrainian tradition, because from Przemyśl came such a spark of Ukrainian national awakening in Galicia. A dozen or so families remain here, which means practically nothing. It's as if life is dying here. In 1947, the building was nationalised, that is, taken over by the state. The associations, not only Ukrainian, but also Polish, are liquidated. And one could say, here we have the end of the story.

Katarzyna Jagodzińska (17:02 - 17:06)

Well, just tell us about the extension, what's next and what's today.

Igor Horków (17:08 - 25:45)

Then it got interesting. What happened, which in principle looked a bit impossible, is that some Ukrainians living as a result of the Vistula action in northern, north-eastern and western Poland are very uncomfortable, to put it diplomatically, about where they live. I mean, there is no Ukrainian environment, it is broken, it is bad to live there, the sky is not as

blue, the sun does not shine as it should, everything is not as it should be, the forests are not as green. The only place where we can feel at home is there in the south of Poland. So you have to go back. But there is no point in going back to my village, because in my house maybe there are Poles living there, or the house has been demolished or burnt down, so where do you have to go back? And besides, there is no Ukrainian community in my village anymore. There's no Orthodox church, there's no parish priest, so basically we'll go back to the state we have in the western and northern lands. So we go back to Przemyśl, because there some Ukrainian civilisation must have survived.

If this is where the bishop was, if this is where the first sparing of Narva Ukraine was performed, if this is where the first Shevchenko concerts were held, if this is the city that Ivan Franko wrote about and to which he often visited, if this is the city where Ukrainian liturgical tradition was revived in Galicia, if this is the city where the temple of the Resurrection of Ruthenia of Ukraine was built at record speed, then something must remain. It was often the case that the eldest son would get on a motorbike of some sort, come to Przemyśl illegally, look for work, and check in, usually in the Przemyśl area, because it wasn't possible then, it was illegal, there was a ban on Ukrainians checking in or living in Przemyśl. After some time, when he had settled down a bit, after a few months he would go and get the rest of his family. A little bit of people returned this way in the late 1950s, 1960s, 1970s to Przemyśl. Interestingly, the Ukrainian House was the place to which these Ukrainians, returned symbolically, in the sense that not to their villages, but to the city, to some myth they wanted to see, that is, to such a symbolic capital of Ukrainians in the region. Most of these people had not been to Przemyśl at all before. Perhaps at a bazaar somewhere, maybe at an Orthodox church fair, but rather not. They were going back to something they had heard about.

The Ukrainian House is the kind of place they direct their steps to when they arrive, and it is here that they meet those Ukrainians one, two, three families left behind. After Stalin's death, as part of the thaw, they started to come out of hiding a bit. Of course, I am oversimplifying and trivialising this, but it was a very difficult story. These Ukrainians with this bourgeois Przemyśl pedigree are very quick to educate those who come. This is the Ukrainian House, do everything to preserve it. There is a cemetery of Sich Sharpshooters there, mostly from Central, Eastern and Southern Ukraine. It must be preserved. It is destroyed, the barrow is smashed, but the time will come, for now take care of it, think about it. Kormosh, Cechłyński, many Ukrainian bishops, priests, social activists are buried in the cemetery. These are their graves, you need to take care of them and so on. This was a Ukrainian school, so it needs to be taken care of, maybe one day it will be revived. Those Ukrainians who come here accept it, and at the end of the 1950s there is the first - probably not very strong, but nevertheless - such an appeal to the communist authorities, gentlemen, return this building to us, too, because we built it for ourselves. We can't give it back to you, we're sorry, we'd like to, but there's no association that built this building, so it's not possible. So the Ukrainians say, well wait, there is no association, because you have liquidated this association, but there are no members of your association, not true, there are, there are still a few alive. And this ping-pong lasted until 2011, which is quite a long time. 1989 started the democratic changes in Poland and so on, and yet it took a very long time.

During this period, the Ukrainians understood that we had to preserve this building, because it is a temple of the resurrection of Rus and Ukraine, you can't just let it go, so we had to start renting first one room, then the second, third, fourth, then almost the entire first floor. This was the only way to preserve this building, to be to some extent, let's say, co-managers of the space and revive cultural and educational life. Then the Ukrainians started to repeat what they had been doing before the war, that is, there were amateur theatres, there were concerts, bands, Shevchenko concerts, because that's what the community knew quite well, so then a kind of social enterprise was set up, more of a business enterprise, which earned money for cultural activities. It was the kind of place that continued to attract people. Well, and that was the next stage, it was 2011, which was the so-called return of the building, but by law it had to be bought back from the Treasury at a discount of ninety-nine per cent, or one per cent of the value. It's the kind of story where you build a building with your funds, then you lose it, then you rent it and then you buy it. You could describe it that way as well. And then, from 2011 onwards, I also started to come to Przemyśl more regularly, together with the president of the Union of Ukrainians, Piotr Tyma. We also came precisely because the building was returned to the community. I had previously read in the weekly newspaper *Our Word* and talked to my colleagues from Przemyśl about this house, so I had sort of heard a lot about it and what I have in my memory from that period, that it was such a story of such a terrible humiliation of the Ukrainian community. Because you build it, you take care of it, you renovate it, they take it back, you have to rent it out, you can't, the roof leaks, something falls down, it's a very important monument, the most important skylight for the Ukrainian community, and you can't get it back. You bang your head against the wall and it's not possible to be a landlord in your own house.

I remember such a meeting in 2011, already after the building was returned to the Ukrainian community. It was asked then, Piotr Tyma asked some of the community activists, including the older ones, who had gone through such a process of humiliation in connection with the attempts to reclaim the building, what do you want this place to be like? I somehow sensed to myself that they would say, we want it to be ours. As Gollum said in *The Lord of the Rings*, my treasure I will not give to anyone, I will not share. I somehow felt that after so many years of such wandering, misunderstanding, lack of acceptance, that this is how it would end. They then said that we wanted it to be an open house for everyone, so that all the residents could enjoy it. And it was amazing basically that they were able to overcome all those prejudices and difficult years. It was kind of a moment where they set the direction for the building to go. So then there was a renovation fairly quickly, replacing the windows in 2012 on the second, third floor and then a major renovation of the first floor, in addition to the theatre room. Then, in stages, the foundations, which means insulation, strengthening, rebuilding the roof, rebuilding the fire escape staircase, renovating the historic polychrome, parquet floors, doors. It's quite an arduous process, because twelve years are basically passing since we started the renovation. But you can see the end, in the sense that we are already far beyond the halfway point of this renovation.

John Beauchamp (25:45 - 25:48)

Kormosz was able to embrace this a little faster.

Igor Horków (25:48 - 26:22)

Indeed, Kormosz managed to embrace it a little faster. It is always easier to build than to renovate, especially historic buildings. However, we also made a conscious decision that

since the building had survived two world wars, it had to be renovated so that it could serve another 100 years, so it could not be a stopgap, nothing for a while.

Katarzyna Jagodzińska (26:25 - 26:30)

Please tell us how your adventure in heading the Ukrainian House began?

Igor Horków (26:32 - 27:31)

When I moved to Przemyśl after I got married - because my wife and I had a choice between Warsaw and Przemyśl, and we thought that Przemyśl was so much friendlier to live in, there was less time to commute, and because I was already working with the main board of the association in Warsaw, the Association of Ukrainians in Poland - when I arrived, I was automatically sucked in by Maria Tucka, then the chairman of the branch association, and Andrzej Komar, who was always quite high up when it came to the structure of the Association of Ukrainians in Poland. So come on, we'll do something together. So I learned a lot with them, they also gave me confidence and left quite a lot of room for action. From 2019, after the elections, I became the chairman of the Przemyśl branch of the Union of Ukrainians in Poland.

Katarzyna Jagodzińska (27:34 - 27:47)

And could you talk a little about the activities that are taking place here today and what dimension this has for the community of Przemyśl, both Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian?

Igor Horków (27:48 - 36:34)

As far as activities are concerned, we actually stopped such activities at the Ukrainian House in 2013 due to the renovation of the first floor. Since 2014, we have already returned to this activity, such a cultural one. All that then took place after 2014 can be called as such a sustainable development. That is to say, every year we added new cultural initiatives, just a little bit at a time, to see how it would work, whether it would be accepted, and at the same time to make it feasible on the budget we had, which was rather modest, so we tended to rely on the work and activities of volunteers. Then, unfortunately, came the pandemic.

But even before the pandemic, we started to do these activities, because we thought that if we wanted to be a cultural centre of the first kind, then these had to be cyclical activities that took place all the time, regardless of whether it was hot, cold, raining or sunny. During the pandemic and before the pandemic, we had such workshops that took place from Monday to Friday. Two or three hours each, but every day and it was something so new and people were also starting to get used to the fact that basically every day you could spend some time in the Ukrainian House in an interesting way. There were singing and art workshops, instrumental workshops, workshops for the elderly, for young people, for children, plus a series of activities which used to be an obligatory part of the programme in the Ukrainian Association in Poland, such as reviews of carol singing groups, joint kutia, anniversary events and Shevchenko concerts. We always strongly emphasised the anniversary of the Pilsudski-Petlura alliance as a military and political cooperation between Poles and Ukrainians.

What was also very interesting was that we decided to open up even more widely to the Polish community, i.e. we asked the local media for media patronage so that they would report on our events. Posters were often either in separate Polish and Ukrainian versions, or

bilingual. At some point, we thought it would be a good idea to join in with the Night of Museums and tell people about what was happening here. During the first edition of the Night of Museums in 2016, about 120 people visited us in two hours, and in the following editions it was more than three hundred. They were not Ukrainians, they were our Polish neighbours from Przemyśl who were interested in what was going on there at the Ukrainian House and a lot of people later came back to us for various events. Then we had a difficult moment, because there was an attack on the Ukrainian procession in Przemyśl, which had been taking place for a long time. We had to cancel one of our outdoor events, Kupala Night. We approached the situation in such a way that if someone is trying to, let's say, silence us or remove us a bit from the public space, it means that we should open up even more. And this has had quite a good effect. Moreover, these activities we have here are not only related to Ukrainian culture. For example, Olga Pasieczny, the world's most famous opera singer, Andrzej Seweryn, the director of the Polish Theatre in Warsaw, who read the Prologue to Ivan Franko's Moses in Polish together with our young people from the band Krajka, i.e. alternately he read and they sang, so we always add something, we try to combine. If we have someone in the format of a star, we always try to add our Przemyśl, Ukrainian context, in order to promote our activity a bit, but also to show that we have something to present, because we really have something to boast about.

For example, in 2017 we started in Przemyśl, we joined the Watch Dogs travelling film festival about human rights, that is, we also offer activities that are not only related to Ukrainian culture, but somehow relate to universal values. We have suggested to some associations, if you lack space for your activities in Przemyśl, come to us and use ours. A couple of associations sometimes use the space of the Ukrainian House to hold a meeting, a gathering, some of their events. It's kind of very exotic from the perspective of Ukrainian culture in Przemyśl, because it's, for example, Mexican dances on the stage of the Ukrainian House, so it's very diverse, but it all attracts residents to us.

The year 2018 was also very important for us, because it was the centenary of Poland's independence. A very important and good event, but at the same time in Przemyśl it's linked to the centenary of the Polish-Ukrainian struggle for Przemyśl. So we saw a little bit of a risk that it could happen that someone would spread such a message that 100 years ago Ukrainians were hostile to Poland and now they are too. So we, as the Union of Ukrainians in Poland, invited acquaintances, friends of Poles and proposed to create a joint initiative to celebrate the centenary of Poland's independence. Firstly, a little, to show that it is possible to live together, and not side by side, and that we can rejoice together in our independence, in the fact that we are in the European Union, and that we adhere to common principles, that is, freedom, human rights, respect for others, the dignity of others, and that everything else is just our addition. Over the course of several months, we have held a dozen or so different cultural and educational events, a debate to mark the centenary of Poland's independence. I think, immodestly speaking, that this was the best celebration of the centenary of Poland's independence in Poland in general. It was very social, very inclusive, different social groups, also different age groups, so it was really very successful, and it is also a moment when everyone saw that it is possible to act with Ukrainians. Interestingly, the Ukrainians are also initiating this themselves, so it was very important for us.

The moment the full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine began, it was obvious to us that we were acting, but we also met in mid-February, which was about two weeks before the outbreak, and asked ourselves what we would do if the worst happened. We decided that since this is a house, the house has to be friendly, open, safe, it has to have a table, you can eat there, sleep there and so on, so we agreed that in case of emergency we would set up an accommodation point plus the fact that our natural resource is the Ukrainian language, so if there was a crowd of people, we would be able to serve them in Ukrainian, a language they would understand. Then, probably two days before the outbreak of war, we met and drew up a plan of which rooms we would free up for people, what we would store, where the kitchen was, how many people we could count on in our work. In fact, in February, the day it started, after 7am, there we were, former pupils with the Ukrainian language of instruction in Przemyśl, setting up field beds and getting ready. It turned out that in addition to people fleeing the war looking for shelter, there were more than five and a half thousand people sleeping in the theatre hall, from February to the end of July 2022, that very many people from Ukraine are starting to look for these identity points, that is, they are looking for, for example, Ukrainian literature, Ukrainian singing workshops, a place where we can continue to learn the Ukrainian language and so on. All these things that we were doing before the war or before the pandemic, it turned out to be needed not only for us but for a still large group of refugees.

John Beauchamp (36:35 - 37:45)

I wanted to ask, following this line of thought, because recently Kasia and I were in Lviv and, talking to, let's say, leaders of Ukrainian culture in Lviv, we got the impression, and they even told us themselves, that Ukrainian culture is even more necessary now and that Ukrainians in general, when it comes to their own heritage, are just coming back and looking for what has always been there, but they were not aware of it. Do you see a similar situation here, that the Ukrainians living in Przemyśl since the start of this full-scale war, that there is a similar sort of awareness, in the sense that they always knew that there was something there, but they weren't very interested, and now, as it were, because of this war, they are even more involved.

Igor Horków (37:46 - 40:11)

It seems to me that yes, they are even more involved. I don't particularly want to judge either, I can only describe more what I noticed from my own observations. When women came to the Ukrainian House after crossing the border, they mostly asked three questions, that is, can I find a job, where can I learn Polish, is there a Ukrainian school here. Those were the three basic questions we were faced with at the beginning, so it was quite interesting. We had plans to open the library after the renovation, when we had renovated this whole floor, but a lot of people from Ukraine were asking if there was a Ukrainian book, so we understood that we needed to open this library much sooner, not in five years. A bit under their pressure and as a result of these questions, we opened this library already in 2022. It's a bit anecdotal, but a woman once came in, somewhere in the middle of 2022, speaking Polish but with a very noticeable eastern-Ukrainian accent, and said that I would like to ask if I can enrol for a language course here. I say Polish? And she says no, Ukrainian. Why? I have lived here for seven years in Przemyśl, I am from southern Ukraine and in this situation that is, I want to learn Ukrainian. She's still taking a Ukrainian language course with us today, so it's quite an interesting experience. Interestingly enough, a lot of refugees who came here came to our organisation, under our wings. Then they met Ukrainians, citizens

and nationals of Ukraine, who had been living in Przemyśl for ten years, for five years, who had never been to the Ukrainian House in Przemyśl, and now they ended up here thanks to the fact that they met refugees from Ukraine and they are already regular recipients of our events. So it's a very interesting process and it's interesting to watch.

John Beauchamp (40:12 - 40:16)

And do you know how many refugees are left in Przemyśl?

Igor Horków (40:16 - 40:24)

Unofficial estimates say between six and eight thousand. For a city with a population of sixty thousand, this is a challenge.

Katarzyna Jagodzińska (40:34 - 40:51)

And of those people who have stayed, is there a community that has stayed with you permanently and participates in events, or perhaps has become even more involved, for example by creating an offer for others?

Igor Horków (40:54 - 43:34)

I spoke to one organisation that supported us. We said that we want to find people who have very specific professions which are not needed on the labour market in Poland, for example, a specialist in painting in the Petrykivsky style, which in Poland, let's be honest, is of no interest to anyone but a niche, or specialists in Ukrainian, archaic singing, which some people are interested in, but it's a niche, you can't make a living out of it. And we proposed, we asked for funds so that we could employ such people and so that these people could run workshops for all the inhabitants of the city. Firstly, so that they could keep their professions, which are not needed in Poland, but are very important from the perspective of Ukrainian culture. And when the war is won, in the process of reconstruction, these people will still be needed, so that they can preserve their experiences, their knowledge and skills. And secondly, so that they can share it both with other Ukrainians, Ukrainians who are here, and with the Polish community.

It is important for the Polish community to see something interesting, something new, and for people to see that refugees are not here to, to put it brutally, overtake us in the queue to the doctor, but that they also have interesting experiences, knowledge and something we can learn from them. Some of our workshops, sometimes 3-4 people, are attended not by Ukrainians but Poles, and these workshops are run by war refugees, now simply residents of Przemyśl. Some of the offer is also based on these people, but new projects have also been created, and Krajeczka, a musical child of the Krajka band, has developed strongly. In connection with the fact that the band Krajka is quite well-known in the environment of authentic music in Poland, having released three records, after the outbreak of full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine, the Polish Radio approached the band to jointly release a record of children's folklore. And so another album was made, with children from Przemyśl, children from Kyiv, musicians from Przemyśl and musicians from Kyiv singing Ukrainian children's folklore. Of course, we continue to rehearse with the Krajeczka ensemble, which continues to develop, sometimes adding new people, and at the same time holding singing workshops for kids from Ukraine and Poland, with as many as thirty people coming, so it is quite difficult to manage, but there is also a lot of fun in it.

Olga Kich-Masłej (43:36 - 43:55)

Thanks to the Ukrainian House, the folklore, the authentic traditions of Nadsanie are getting into the public space today. You are implementing many projects related to this. This is Krajka, but also many others. Perhaps we can talk a little about this?

Igor Horków (43:56 - 46:58)

This part related to folklore, to authenticity, is indeed quite strongly represented and accentuated in our activities. Apart from Krajka, we have Krajeczka, and there is also a band called HrayBery which specialises in playing music from, among other places, Nadsanie or Przemyskie. It has existed for a year, I think. We run folk singing workshops. Now we have started a new project, which is to run a centre of traditional music and dance, and this is funded by the National Institute of Music and Dance at the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. These are cyclical singing workshops for adults, for children, instrumental and folk dance workshops. This is a very cool new form, as it is somehow institutionalised plus has a financial backing. In addition, there is the Arkan Folk Dance Group, which has been in existence since 1991. There is a bandura group at the school, which is also supported by the Union of Ukrainians in Poland. There is also a sopilka band, in other words, young people play sopilki, or bagpipes, let's say, shepherd's instruments. So these are the basic activities that are carried out. And then there are the concerts we sometimes give. They often have a folklore dimension. We also invite specialists from Ukraine who deal with traditional culture.

We invite specialists in traditional culture, such as Horea Kozacka or Taras Kompanichenko, or our good friends from the village of Wawryków on the Ukrainian side, who recreate the folklore of the river Bug river and sometimes come to us for workshops. They always perform on stage, but there are also workshops for anyone who is interested. I personally feel a little underrepresented in the field of, say, Ukrainian classical music. We also do not have such a resource. Here we need to support ourselves with artists we invite to us. And there is also something to show in this area. We have Werbycki himself, or Ludkiewicz, a composer who basically lives next door in Yaroslavl and Lviv. Our very strong point, which is developing well and steadily and is going in the right direction, is precisely this traditional folk culture from Nadsanie or Przemyskie.

Olga Kich-Masłej (47:00 - 47:29)

You have also talked a lot today about traditional Orthodox singing, which is an asset of Przemyśl, of this land. Few people know that Mr Ihor Horków is a certified deacon. Will the teaching of Orthodox singing also take place within the walls of the Ukrainian House?

Igor Horków (47:31 - 48:23)

With this diploma of deacon I actually have one, but I never took it up seriously after that. Apart from singing in the choir under the direction of Jarosław Wójdzik, who is probably the best specialist in Poland when it comes to liturgical singing, there was a time when we had a workshop of such male liturgical singing, this was still during the pandemic period. These were very interesting classes and we are basically open to any initiative. If only there are people willing to run it, we will find the space and look for the means to do it at a good level. However, it is indeed a very important part of this local, Ukrainian tradition, which certainly needs better care.

Katarzyna Jagodzińska (48:27 - 48:38)

Could you talk a little more about the organisational and financial model of the house? You mentioned it a bit earlier, and what is the staffing?

Igor Horków (48:40 - 51:11)

The Ukrainian House is owned by the Union of Ukrainians in Poland, a registered association which has been in existence since 1990 and which has ten regional branches, several dozen local circles. One of its branches is the Przemyśl branch, which is the finest, the best and, at the same time, modest, but I can assure you that if you went to Koszalin, you would find out there that the Koszalin branch is the finest, because in the Union of Ukrainians in Poland, modesty comes first. The Przemyśl branch is quite vibrant. This is related to the fact that we have such a challenge as maintaining the building. We support ourselves partly from grants, from donations, a little from membership fees. Of course, everything was turned upside down by the war, because there was a lot of money for us, or for the funding that we had before. It was also a bit of a different situation, because previously we had applied for a grant, and the moment the big international financial partners came, they saw what we were doing, how we were doing it, that it was of good quality, that it was secure and safe. They checked our accounting, our administration, our financial management, they recognised that they could entrust their own funds to us and it sort of overturned the model, the best way to illustrate this is with one simple example. On the twenty-second of February 2022, it was just me working full-time in Przemyśl and a colleague on a quarter-time basis. We are now employing one hundred and twenty people in various capacities. That is a very big increase. And all that we had until the outbreak of the full-time war was sustainability, and everything after that was a negation of that sustainability. Three quarters of those people are people who work twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week as refugee support. We run two hostels, we are at the railway station, we run a mother and child room at the railway station. We provide administrative support, legal support. Everything related to refugees living in Przemyśl, from birth to cremation.

Katarzyna Jagodzińska (51:14 - 51:21)

In relation to this role of just supporting refugees, is there cooperation with the city here?

Igor Horków (51:24 - 51:34)

We are constantly in contact and try to cooperate. This cooperation is most evident at the railway station in Przemyśl.

John Beauchamp (51:34 - 51:37)

Very well, diplomatically said. I have one last question.

Katarzyna Jagodzińska (51:39 - 52:27)

I also have the last one. I am intrigued by your project related to giving work or jobs to people who represent these niche professions. As you mentioned, this is also an intangible heritage which, once the war is over, will have a chance to return to Ukraine, so that this tradition can continue to be cultivated there. Could you tell us a little more about this? What is its nature? Are these the two you mentioned or something more? What is the interest in taking part in such workshops?

Igor Horków (52:28 - 55:01)

Now the interest has stabilised, meaning there is a steady group of people who come to this. These are authentic singing workshops led by Seweryn Danyłajko and Ivana Danyłajko. Together or in turns, they are also variously supported by Tatiana Nakonieczna in this, which is like a Ukrainian from Kyiv and a Ukrainian from Przemyśl. A lady who used to do Petrykivka-style painting workshops with us. Unfortunately, the workshops at our place were her only source of income, and she had two granddaughters in her care, so she left for Lower Silesia and we recently stopped these workshops. We also had an attempt, because there is quite a good choirmaster here from Kyiv, to create a choir, but perhaps because of the multiplicity of our activities we couldn't get the right group of people together, so unfortunately it didn't work out. So these are such basic flagship things. We also have an artist-in-residence programme. Every month we invite up to six people to artist residencies here in Przemyśl from different fields of art. These are writers, poets, visual arts, painting, dancers, and there have also been musicians, folk classical, jazz, who come to Przemyśl, create in peace, that is, without bomb alarms, without gunfire, and receive support, humanitarian and financial assistance, a place to live and full board. This is a form of support for Ukrainian culture that we also give. Of course, we will not save all the destruction that Russia is doing. This project has funding until the end of 2024 for the time being and eighty artists from Ukraine have now gone through it and half of them have said that these residencies have unlocked them in their creative work and these people have returned to creating Ukrainian culture so this is such a very big indicator for us which shows that this is very much needed.

Olga Kich-Masłej (55:08 - 55:19)

Upstairs, on the first floor, we saw a star performed by residents from Ukraine. Please say a few words about it.

Igor Horków (55:19 - 59:30)

We had a resident whose grandmother came from the village of Maćkowice, and in cooperation with a carpenter in Ukraine, she began to reconstruct the star on the basis of photos and descriptions of her grandmother, what the star looked like, and here in Przemyśl, as part of her residency, she assembled the star so that it looked like a star and visited the ruins of the church in Maćkowice. We recorded a short material about the star's return to the former church. These returns are quite important to us and the stories behind these returns are important. We had such an interesting project documented on Powernynia.pl. We recorded interviews with people who had returned to Przemyśl, that is, who had not lived in Przemyśl before, but after the Vistula action decided to return. Why did they decide to do so? What motivated them? This is a dozen or so conversations which later resulted in a theatrical performance in Polish called "What is life without a river?". It was a story and a bit of collective therapy for the Ukrainian minority on the subject of return, but also a few people from the Polish community came up to us afterwards and commented that now we understand what the Vistula action and the return are all about, so it was very successful.

In the context of still this history and the returns, in connection with the fact that a lot of Ukrainians from here left or were deported to Soviet Ukraine, we don't know this history but sometimes such a nice event happens like in 2017, Krystyna Kudryk from Canada came, she wrote us an email. I was born in Przemyśl, before I die I want to see it again. She arrived

with her brother, much older than her, stood in front of the entrance to the building and says: I remember, there was a candy shop in this doorway, my dad used to bring us here. We didn't know there was a candy shop, we knew there was a clothes shop and a hairdresser, but that a candy shop was not. We took her to the second floor, she says here I remember, here was our flat. Dad was a notary, in the first room he received clients and in the second room we slept, four people. Me, mum, dad and brother. We're trying to recreate something from stories like that, a little bit of what we can't find or in the archives, which is available somewhere probably more in North America. Last summer, last autumn, we had such a visit from two people, one from Toronto, the other from Washington, whose parents were involved with the Ukrainian House before World War II. They were actually there more to find out what was here, what it was like. Ola, who came for the first time, read her father's memoirs before coming to Poland. She found in them that there was a National Dim and that he had performed on stage there and danced in a folk group. She came, she saw and so on. And the other was a descendant from the Zachajkiewicz family, very famous here in Przemyśl as social, political and cultural activists. It was very interesting to hear him speak, because he uses the same words. Even though he was born in Canada, he uses the same words that Ukrainians used in Przemyśl before World War II, for example, he doesn't say *knedle*, but *knidli*. This was very interesting. He asked us if Ukrainians in Przemyśl still eat fish in Greek, because in Canada only they, that is the Przemyśl people eat fish in Greek, nobody else, so it was quite an interesting experience. If anyone has such stories, knows them, we are very happy to receive them, read them and often get moved by them.

John Beauchamp (59:31 - 59:48)

So my final question. I would like to ask you, this is a bit of a fortune teller, but where do you see yourself in five years and where do you see the Ukrainian House here in five, ten years or in the longer term?

Igor Horków (59:48 - 1:02:52)

In the long term, I hope that we will complete the renovation. The theatre hall will be renovated in five years' time, and those parts of the building which have not yet been renovated, i.e. the first part, where we have the library and the basement, and the façade of the building, will return to their former glory. As far as the site itself is concerned, that we manage to keep at least some of this funding that we have now, so that the building continues to operate resiliently and that it continues to develop. We would very much like the artist-in-residence programme to be maintained, plus we are currently working on a residency programme for community activists from Ukraine, for local media journalists. We invite them for two or three weeks to Przemyśl, they receive financial support, they can rest, gain new contacts, experience.

We want to open a Ukrainian-Polish school of dialogue and democracy in Przemyśl, which would serve for the exchange of such, let's say, social or civic issues between Ukrainians and Poles, because when it comes to dialogue issues, we are really very good at it. We work in the Nansen methodology, a Scandinavian methodology. We are implementing it. We wrote a handbook as part of the EU project "Dialogues of Generations", which we intended to be a handbook which would cure our Polish-Ukrainian misunderstanding in Przemyśl. Among several hundred projects implemented, this one came second in terms of the quality of the product, and interestingly enough, it turned out to be a handbook not only for the problems of the Przemyśl area, but also for international corporations which have staff from various

parts of the world. They are very keen to use it, because it allows them to avoid misunderstandings, miscommunication in the workplace, where there are people from different backgrounds, with different historical, mental, social experience and so on. We would also like this to be part of our institutional set-up, but of course it is a question of finding the resources, because we have the staff, the will and we know how to do it. Moreover, I would very much like to develop classical culture in addition to the traditional part. Rock culture is developing a bit for us. We have a youth band, which is a big word, because the oldest member of the band is eleven years old, but they play good rock music, and it's important that this develops. And it's important that the house continues to be a place which is not only Ukrainian, but also a very Przemyśl-based place of civic activity. And where do I see myself in five years, as being here in this place? Not necessarily in this place, oh yes. Thank you very much for the interview.