

Sacred from page B1

The chorus was founded in 1918 in the shadows of those churches in Kiev. The chorus brings things full circle from the land where the music was found. The use of basses and lower voices is characteristic of Ukrainian sacred music. The point is to bring the listener closer to God. It's somber, melancholy Ukrainian music that leaves you in awe. Eastern European and Ukrainian sacred music is very mystical. It has that mystical effect on people.

Hunting sound

The music is the reason Arnold Birko, 71, joined the chorus in 1963. Birko originally played mandolin with the chorus as well as mandolin in a Ukrainian orchestra.

"Most of Ukrainian music is melodic," said Birko, a Livonia engineer and bandurist with the chorus. Murha spends an hour a day practicing the 60-string instrument. "We sing at weddings and a week after Easter, celebrating life."

In the beatitudes, each verse is nearly

the same musically but with quirks at the end. It sounds familiar, but it's an ancient tune and a recurring theme you can hear in Tchaikovsky's "1812" overture.

"But it's not just the music, it's to express yourself in singing. Then we came to the U.S. in 1949. My wife's father was a member of the Bandurist Chorus. I got goose bumps when I was listening to them, so I decided to try to make it into the chorus."

Because of the bond between musicians, many of the members span generations. Birko's son Andrij, 31, is a member of the chorus, along with Vladimir Murha and his son, Anatoli.

"It's very much part of our culture," said Vladimir Murha, a Livonia engineer and bandurist with the chorus. Murha spends an hour a day practicing the 60-string instrument. "We sing at

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"But it's not just the music, it's

being involved in the culture. The chorus has been a part of history since 1918 in Ukraine. My son is now continuing the tradition and honor that goes with perpetuating a culture."

New blood

Unlike many classical and jazz musicians, the average bandurist is getting younger. That's due largely in part to the older generation nurturing a love for the instrument in their children, and bandura camps held summers in Michigan, Pa. Anatoli began playing bandura at age 14. He's now 23.

"I remember when the bandura was bigger than I was," said Anatoli. "I was a typical kid playing with baseball cards, then I started taking lessons with Andrij and then with my dad. I loved it so much I saved up and bought a bandura."

Anatoli, however, didn't stop at learning to play the \$3,000 bandura hand-carved from a single piece of wood. He joined the chorus and is now president of the executive board. Like his father, Anatoli encourages young musicians to develop skills and playing techniques at the camps where he is now co-director.

"I enjoy giving back to the younger generation," said Anatoli.

toli, "but it goes deeper than that. On tour, I've seen the western Canadian Rockies and Ukraine. It's the people you meet, the relationships you start. Most aren't people I just see on the weekend. I consider them brothers. There's brotherhood."

"It's a definite connection to your culture. I remember my grandmother singing. I'd never heard that sound anywhere before. It's a sound unique to the bandurist chorus. The sacred music is haunting yet soothing but very intriguing. So much has always left an impact on me."

It had an impact on the rest of the 39-chorus members, who range in age from 18 to 87. Now the chorus would like to share its music with all cultures and religions. One of the first steps was contacting local churches such as St. Paul's. In addition to the April 8 performance, the chorus will perform sacred music the first weekend in May in Cleveland and the first week in June in Toronto.

Anyone interested in scheduling a sacred concert in fall or wanting to the chorus' trip to Ukraine should call Anatoli at (734) 853-0305 or visit the Web site at www.bandura.org.

Ant from page B1

He's counting on "The Adding Machine," to bring in new customers.

Great story

"It's just a fascinating play," he said. "It was written in the 1920s, and isn't a well-known play. But the issues are just as powerful now as they were then — man versus the drudgery of everyday life. It challenges the audience to not live in a coma to get out of 40 hours a week doing something you hate."

Mr. Zero hates his job. His wife nags him.

Griffith calls the play a stylized drama. It was strongly influenced by early 20th century German theater.

"I've worked jobs I've hated before," he said. "I worked in a cubicle for a year answering a phone. We all have dreams, but there are a lot of different reasons why we don't follow them. It's always a dilemma. There are all these outside factors chipping away at what we want to do in life."

Metro Detroit theater veteran

Robert Grossman stars as Mr. Zero, who adds numbers all day at work. His home life isn't good, and he cracks, "It's a journey," said Griffith.

Abby Adler of Birmingham is Mrs. Zero, his nagging wife. Susan Borg his coworker and love interest, and Steven Nicolich Shurdlu, a man looking for

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York R. Griffith
director

forgiveness.

Taking chances

"I feel like we take a certain amount of chances," said Griffith explaining his attraction to Planet Ant. "It's helping me grow as an artist. We do high quality productions. I like the intimacy of the space. That's really where theater is headed."

His cell phone rings, and Griffith answers. Life is good now, he's happy.

"I want to continue growing as an artist in theater," he said. "I have the right kind of freedom here. The only constraints are financial. It's a very healthy feeling to have."

"I'd love to see Detroit have a lot faith in Planet Ant and see it become a staple of the theater community."

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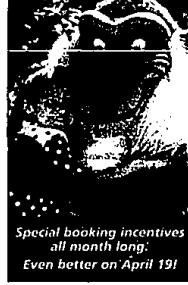
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