

**Interview with Maria Burmaka (M.B.). Interviewer: Roman Kabachiy (RK). Place of record: Kyiv.**

## FAMILY

**R.K.: What stages of your life are the most important for you? Where are you from?**

M.B.: It happened so that not long ago I turned 46 years old, so during my adult life I was the witness and the direct participant of all those events which we now call ‘revolutions’, as well as of all the events which were prior to them and which followed. In my heart I feel a total connection with all the social changes and transformations that happened in Ukraine. I was born in Kharkiv, went to Kharkiv University, graduated from music school where I learned to play the guitar. I was quite young when I started writing my own songs. During the second year of studies at the university I went to Kyiv to take part in the students’ music contest. That was a very important moment in my life. At that time, I was already trying to write my own songs, but at that time I wasn’t presenting my own songs: I sang a traditional Ukrainian song ‘duma’ (my father taught me to sing that song and he filled my soul with that special Ukrainian spirit of music). The song format was a bit unnatural for Kharkiv, but after all, when I look back at my life I understand that some of the most interesting and consistent Ukrainians I’ve ever known come from Eastern Ukraine.

### Influences

Ukrainian song  
Place of birth

**R.K.: So can I make it clear: Kharkiv region and Slobozhanshyna are also places which you call ‘home’?**

M.B.: My mother comes from Pryluky in Chernihiv region, my father spent his whole life in Kharkiv, while his father was born in the Sumy region. Which we also call Slobozhanshyna. My parents met at the Kharkiv University students’ symphony orchestra. Music was always a part of my life, I heard it since my very childhood. My dad taught me how to sing and then I went to music school and was surrounded by very pro-Ukrainian and freedom-loving spirits and people. So that’s why when I came to Kyiv to take part in this music contest at the age of 18, I said

### Influences

Family

Ukrainian ‘duma’ and the song “Take me across the maidan”. It was based on the poem of Vitaliy Korotych [Ukrainian poet, the chief editor of the popular Moscow journal “Ogon’ok”]. We know the Russian variant of this poem, but the original was written in Ukrainian. And after I performed this poem I immediately got to know many students who were already waiting for me near the stage. They were students of some physical or technical faculty, and among them were Volodymyr Chemerys, Kost’ Yerofeiev, Dmytro Korchynskyi and many other members of a democratic organization called “Hromada”. So we immediately went to walk around the city. I was 18, we were singing songs, I fell in love, so everything was as it should have been. The me that I should start writing my own songs, my own poems. The topic was quite clear, dictated by Ukrainian youth of that time. And that youth was very beautiful. My first song based on the poem of Bohdan Lepskiy “The Black Raven”. That was an extremely important period of my life.

**Influences**  
Environment  
(Democratic organization  
“Hromada”)

Not only did I decide to start writing my own songs, but I also brought the scenario of Shevchenko dedicated party, and a homemade printed version of poems of Vasyl Stus. I remember the moment when I shared all this with some of my friends, my groupmates immediately decided to organise a stage version of Shevchenko dedicated party at KI University. After a very short period of time one of my friends told me that he had a serious talk with the representatives of a ‘special department’ and that they were particularly interested in the materials I brought from Kyiv.

**Influences**  
University  
studying

My father always taught me to love and respect Ukraine and Ukrainian language and to find self-awareness in Ukrainian culture. He explained why we should speak Ukrainian – cause then people who see and hear us in Kharkiv would understand that this territory is also Ukraine. He told me how we should react and many other things about Ukrainian poetry, the Executed Renaissance, literature, history, everything...

**R.K.: Was he somehow connected with the Ukrainian dissident movement?**

**M.B.:** I don't think so. It was a certain type of consciousness that is typical for the modern young people who begin to realise who they are and live in Eastern Ukraine. It's a certain point where they should break the barrier in order to understand who they really are. My father was very modern. When I was born he was 22 and my mother was 21. They loved Beatles and yoga and all this was an indispensable part of our everyday life. I do perfectly remember all the talks they had when I was 5 or 6 years old and they were 27-28, and the way they tried to bring me up. So when the events of 1989-1990 came I was completely ready for them. I don't even know whether I'm still as self-committed and confident as I used to be at that time, though now I have my own family, a child to care of, my father, my relative, but still... It seems to me that at that time my feelings and moral positions were more straight and stable. But maybe it's the way we all feel when we are 18 years old.

**R.K.:** That was also the time when the 'Rukh' movement was born. Did you feel that something was happening and was there any youth center of 'gravity'?

**M.B.:** Frankly speaking, I don't remember any such center. In 1988 the so-called congress of the Ukrainian Language Society took place. In some way it was the predecessor of the 'Rukh' movement. It was the first time when Viacheslav Chornovil took the stage. Something important was clearly felt in the air. But there wasn't any particular youth movement at that time. It happened later. But I do perfectly remember the time I came to the 'Rukh' meeting and felt that something was coming. Doniy came to Kharkiv and that was a real event for everyone. He still likes to remember that when he came he had two telephone numbers of 'reliable people' in his pockets. And I was one of those 'reliable people', though I was only 18 at that time.

**History**  
"Rukh"  
Ukrainian  
Language Society  
V. Chornovil

But in fact we were talking about serious things, about our future and how it all should be. The Ukrainian Helsinki Group just began to arise at that time and we all got to know each other, though I really didn't think of myself as of a member of some 'youth' movement, but I rather as a grown up serious person.

**History**  
Ukrainian  
Helsinki Group

**R.K.:** Did the Church play any important role for you at that stage of your life or earlier?

M.B.: I didn't really feel that church was playing any important role at that time. We celebrated Easter and Christmas, and these were not just ordinary dates for us. But in 1970-s we almost didn't have this. I do remember that I went somewhere to consecrate some willow branches, I was already grown-up and it was before Easter. Frankly speaking I do like religious holidays because of their ritual traditions. We had this in our family but not in the canonical form and without the ritual components.

**R.K.: So you mean that you liked church for its pro-national elements?**

M.B.: In Kharkiv the main religion is orthodox. In my life I met two people who joined the church and had a great influence on me. The first one is Ihor (real name Yuriy) Isichenko **archbishop of**

Influences  
Professors

**Kharkiv and Poltava regions' Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine]**, who was one of my lecturers at the university. The second one is Viktor Marynychak **[the priest of Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate]**, whom I also met at the university. They both later joined the church but I used to know them as exceptional specialists, real humanitarians. It was later that I realized what a pleasure it was to listen to them and really learn something useful and important. Isichenko was reading lectures about ancient Ukrainian literature and as we were only the first year students he made us read the Bible as a text. He explained to us, that we wouldn't be able to understand literature of the following epochs if we didn't know the words of the Holy Book. So I think this also had a great influence on me. But it had no influence on my love to Ukraine. It was rather inspired by my parents, my certain personal reflections, influenced by my Kyiv friends, who later made me acquainted with many students from Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk.

\*\*\*\*\*

REVOLUTION ON THE GRANITE

**R.K.: What other events should be identified before we start talking about Revolution on the Granite?**

M.B.: To my mind an important stage was "Chervona Ruta" festival in Chernivtsi **[September 7-24, 1989]**. It was a revolutionary event in the field of music. We do understand now what is the

History  
"Chervona Ruta"  
Influences  
Musical  
environment

soft power that holds the world. Before that I had a festival of art song in Lutsk, where I won the Grand Prize, and I was already 19 at that time. When I came to “Chervona Ruta” festival it seemed to me that there would be very few participants, and that no one would know anything about the festival. But it was the real breakthrough! Cause if we take, for instance, political events we know that everything will work if there is enough level of emotions. And if we speak about “Chervona Ruta” – it was all one overwhelming emotion. They played beautiful music, that wasn’t performed in Ukraine before. It was something that broke through the borders of official norms. People who went there in embroidered shirts holding Ukrainian flags, that were immediately taken away by the police. The first real spiritual rise and the first resistance. But the enthusiasm won. We used to have such spiritual rises before but they were always suppressed and couldn’t develop. They simply couldn’t evolve in something fundamental, vivid and emotional. “Chervona Ruta” was a great festival. It was huge! At the very end when we had the final concert on the stadium in Chernivtsi, the light suddenly disappeared and police began to chuck people out with the dogs. It was dark, and all winners were standing at the center of the stadium in absolute silence.

**R.K.: Were you scared or did the support of people inspire you?**

M.B.: Of course, we were scared. Students from Lviv, for instance, were severely bitten. Yes, it was scary. And it was especially scary in 1991 during the second “Chervona Ruta” festival held in Zaporizhzhia. And by the way it was the time when Putsch happened. All the telephones hotel were immediately disconnected. You see when you are 18 years old and you don’t Lviv in the friendly environment of people who share your ideas, but instead of this you live in Kharkiv, and you don’t even know who actually reported on you to the university... You don’t actually know who is waiting for you round the corner when you are going home... At some moments I had the impression that someone was following me. I was very nervous. So of course I was afraid like many people at that time, and I don’t really believe those who say that they are not afraid of anything. If you don’t have any real protection, or if you are not sure that there is always someone or something that will protect you – then, I think, everyone is scared. You feel less scared when you are among a group of people.

<p><b>Emotions</b></p> <p>Fear</p>
------------------------------------

In 1989, the “Ruta” festival, songs about love, stories, songs about freedom, many decent young people, summer – all this has created a certain mood in the soul, which then resulted in the fact that people wanted to fight for it. Ukrainian consciousness became informal, loved, familiar and close.

**R.K.: Was it of high quality?**

M.B.: It's a bit hard for me to talk about it in such categories, as I'm a person who was a part of it, who was inspired by it – I can't even talk about music whether it was of high quality or not. So now when I think about “Chervona Ruta” festivals, I remember them as the moments of excitement, love, new friends and adventures. It was a real community of people, who were all very different, and there was plenty of them there. And I have never experienced anything like that before, like many other people who later came to Maidan in Kyiv, like those students who refused to eat.

**R.K.: But you were also destroying the stereotypes coming from Kharkiv to the festival!**

M.B.: I am still asked why I speak Ukrainian if I come from Kharkiv. And then it was positive that thanks to “Chervona Ruta” many people got acquainted with each other. And, for example, Donii and Ivashchyshyn, someone with Ivano-Frankivsk, later they all were on Kyiv granite now, after establishing communications, we can analyze these tools, what resulted in what. And that people departed from the festival feeling siblings and closest friends. These connections between them continued, and, moreover, after the “Chervona Ruta” there were touring - 100 concerts by the winners of the festival all over Ukraine. And all those people, who had come to Chernivtsi, came to these concerts and we continued to communicate. We all learned news quickly. Young people felt then the strength; I perfectly remember when during the performance by "BB" in Chernivtsi there came the news that Shcherbytskyi resigned **[the 1st secretary of Communist Party from the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 1972 to the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 1989]**. This stupefying feeling that everything is possible! Before that we felt that it wouldn't be possible ever. And here - "We have the power!" Movement is the power, Ukraine and Ukrainian culture is the power.

**Revolution on  
the Granite  
Actors**  
Donii  
Ivashchyshyn

Therefore, students' fasting, which I knew about from Kharkiv, ended for me with a few-day trip there, I even have photos of those events.

When I am invited to various events, I like to look not back, but forward, though I have a lot of memories to recollect - all these revolutions, these happenings. If you ask what the essence of my life is, I will say – this and that, I plan to do such a thing and the other. I do not like to look back. Many people prefer the opposite. I remember how some people, who were not involved in certain events, put on the mask of people, involved in everything, but I know that they were not there, I did not see. Therefore, I do not like to say that I was here or there. But there is documentary evidence, a lot of photos.

**R.K.: Is it possible to say about some of those who were on granite, how to outline it now, that they did it for further PR**

M.B.: No, I did not see and do not know anyone who would participate insincerely. I cannot name any of those whom it met there and with whom I am communicating now - for the most part they were and remained nonconformists. Those people we know in the face, they are certainly not lost, each of them has their own way, and this way is worthy, noticeable, public.

**R.K.: Maybe you can remember someone not very public?**

M.B.: A lot of time passed. I have Donii, Ivashchyshyn on my mind – it is clear, as well as Anzhelika Rudnytska (Dearu dradzik - Деару драдзік), and a bard who sang there. Taras Petriv who teaches at the Institute of Journalism and who interviewed me then. But too many things have happened for me to remember everything. I have been recently said: Do you remember in 1990 we were going by the same train! A lot of people go through my life.

**R.K.: But you also have music linkage to each of these revolutions. What songs do you associate with the Revolution on Granite?**

M.B.: I did not write songs deliberately to any of the revolutions. I sang what had been written. And at that time there were – based on poems by Oleksandr Oles “Oj ne kvitny vesno” (“Oh, do



not bloom, spring"), "Snih v haiu, ale vesnoiu" ("Snow in the grove, but in spring"), "Koly b my plakaty mohly" ("If we could cry"), songs sung by me even today. Oles was banned in Soviet times, and these are the texts for which I was called, for example, to the Department of the university. I brought them a book published in 1961 and said that the poems had been written in 1905. Plus I sang folk songs. Since I studied at the Faculty of Philology, I went on folk expeditions and had a lot of songs recorded then. For instance, one of the songs recorded by me... well, I was cunning a little bit. It happens that you record the melody, but the old lady does not remember all the text or the melody is fuzzy. That is why in the first album "Oj ne kvitny vesno" there are folk songs, to which I wrote melodies. I told myself: Well, I'm a people, aren't I? Why don't I write the melody and say that the song is folk? There is no big sin. I could not write that the poem was folk, and music was by Maria Burmaka, who was 18. It seemed arrogant to me. And now I can hear some of them sung by folk bands that say the songs are folk. For example, "Misiatsiu Rohozhenku " or "Oi chyia to ruta-miata", which has a very interesting story: I sang it at "Ruta" and then of course everywhere and after a while with the bard Vasyl Zhdankin whose wife Lada later moved to Poland, her stage name is Maria. And once I saw her singing "Oi chyia to ruta-miata" at an accelerated pace in the foreground in the film "With Fire and Sword" ("Vohnem i mechem") as a Ukrainian wedding song! It is really a wedding one, but I do know who the author of the music is! Such moments-hoaxes often happen in my life.

Summing up those years, I did not write my own lyrics then but I did write songs based on poems by Ukrainian poets.

**R.K.: Which of your songs have caused the most emotional breakdowns so that everyone got itchy feet and rushed to save the motherland? Personally I was very impressed by "Batkivshchyna" ("Homeland") based on poems by Bohdan-Ihor Antonych.**

M.B.: Maybe in reality there is much of that, but songs like that are not numerous. I love each of my songs, and this song based on poems by Antonych is very dear to me. Later I wrote a song based on his poem "Stradalna maty" ("Suffering mother") and recorded them, and now my career of a composer and singer has been lasting for 27 years. Sometimes, when I do not repeat these songs, I start to forget the very harmonic passages. In Ukraine it is always a big problem to carry



music down. Where can this song “Batkivshchyna” by B.-I. Antonych be heard? Nowhere! Only on my website or through these memories. But, nevertheless, I am sometimes addressed by people, and it's nice and touching when they ask about a song based on poems by Oles, such as “Khtos blyzkyi-blyzkyi prysnyvsia” (“I had a dream about someone close-close”) (someone came at night, someone wept and quietly writhed on my shoulder). And you know, for a long time there was no free space in our media space, and internet was unavailable as well, for songs that go beyond the pop format but I do hope that the situation will improve. Such things were impossible to be heard anywhere. And your creative ideas cannot be hidden, you just write them. The second point is that to get something heard, it must be recorded, and it demands investments of funds that - you know - will not be refunded. They should be earned. For that reason a lot of interesting musicians have no sound recordings, even now. Though I have been approached to [be thanked]. Such “approaches” champion is of course the song “Ne biisia zhyty” (“Do not be afraid to live”). It is more narrative, declarative ... For me it is subtler than when a person cannot live without the song “Batkivshchyna” (“Motherland”). The song “Ne biisia zhyty” (“Do not be afraid to live”) literally helped many people overcome some difficult situations. I was sent a photo with people doing a tattoo on their arm with the song “Ne biisia zhyty” (“Do not be afraid to live”), I have it on the phone.

### **R.K.: When the boys’ from granite conditions were met, was it seen as a victory or failure?**

M.B.: Now, looking back, we realize that it was not an absolute victory, that it was in the execution of two decisions. But then for the students it certainly was a victory, and we understand that at that moment it was unbelievable that it happened in principle, at all. Till all the revolutions in Ukraine happened without victims. Frankly speaking, after 2013 and then I was extremely grateful to God for no victims and we have to value that. Because students were frantic, the street traffic was blocked, and this was a totalitarian system! It was that youth is inebriating, and you think that everything will be easy and simple, because these are students’ demands. I think at that time it was the only conscious option. If not, if students had decided that it was not enough, and had begun to put more pressure, it could have ended in tragedy already then. This is my subjective point of view.

<p><b>Revolution on the Granite</b></p> <p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <p>Populist compromise</p> <p><b>Actors</b></p> <p>Students</p> <p><b>Emotions</b></p> <p>Fearless</p>
---

**R.K.: You mean compromise has played its positive role?**

M.B.: For me, saved lives always mean a positive role. That is in the current situation, looking ahead and speaking about 2013, there appear a lot of questions that may be asked by parents, whose children were killed two years after the Revolution of Dignity, what actually their kids died for. And these questions are very uncomfortable to be answered by people who came to power. Then, fortunately, such questions were not asked because everyone stayed alive. In fact, it is worth recalling the situation in China [in Tiananmen Square], in other countries, what could have happened then. Being a mom of a student, a young girl, now I feel completely different about it. This is really painful when in political issues there arises risk to the lives of young people.

\*\*\*\*\*

ORANGE REVOLUTION

**R.K.: Do you think this revolution has any specific influence on the following ones? Has Maidan become an indispensable part of our lives? Something we just can't live without?**

M.B.: Absolutely not! Frankly speaking, each new Maidan was a great surprise for me. I was directly involved in all those events and I was the person who somehow tried to make those events happen in Kharkiv as together with other students I organised a protest procession of Kharkiv University students on the former Dzerzhinsky square (the current Independence square). And each time the success and the gained results turn our heads a bit. But then follows the period of stagnation when you may feel some kind of disappointment that something is not the way you expected it to be – the so-called time of recuperation (we lost many during this stage as the feeling of disappointment was fatal). Then some time passes and, for instance, what happened in 2004 was a complete surprise for me. I do remember the evening of November 21 – we had the second round of election campaign – I turned on the TV on November 22 and couldn't believe my eyes! The new Maidan, the stage, the people – I dressed up and went there. But I still can't say that even

Orange Revolution Place Kharkiv
---------------------------------------

after the Revolution of 2004 I had a feeling that we can't live without Maidan. Definitely. Instead I had feeling that something might change at last.

**Actors**  
Ordinary people

These Revolutions ruin the myth Ukrainian people care only about their own welfare and that they can tolerate everything. There is some period of energy accumulation and after it the quantity changes into quality. The same happened in 2013, I didn't really believe that this may happen. But certain events happened which we know, there wasn't any unbiased investigation and I don't really think it's possible as each party has its own vision of those events. As time passes new and new facts become known and they help us realise that not everything was either black or white. Many things were too complicated to be understood, and some of them were really beyond our common reason. But this revolution gave me the feeling that 'anything like this will never happen again'.

**R.K.: And didn't you have the feeling after the Orange Revolution that you were somehow used or betrayed?**

M.B.: No, I didn't. I've never had such feelings as I do always understand why I do something and for what reasons. I didn't have expectations or special preferences. Many people thought I was a great friend of President Yushchenko, but frankly speaking I saw him only once or twice during the whole presidency.

**Outcomes**  
positive

**R.K.: Maybe this happened because of your cousin Yuriy Pavlenko, who was the Minister of Youth and Sports at that time?**

M.B.: There are such rumors, but so what? Our political paths have gone apart, and he has his own reasons for this **[at the elections 2014 Pavlenko was elected deputy from the Opposition block]**. I was radically against this, I didn't understand his decision and that was painful. And everyone always asks me about this. But now when we meet, Yura also asks me questions for which I have no answers. And one of them is – what have the children on Maidan died for? Where are the reforms? And it's hard to find answers for such questions.

And speaking about the whole situation I never tried to use in my own favour. I tried to be invisible, I never used that situation to enhance my political or musical career. I fought for freedom of creation, as creative work was always on the first place for me. I fought for Ukrainian people, for their ability to be governors of their own country. For Ukrainian music to be known in the whole world. I fought for the freedom of Ukraine. As for the disappointment, maybe I had some shadows of this feeling, but it never destroyed or killed me.

#### Motivations

The freedom of creation

It's quite obvious that some thoughts I put into music, and not everyone likes it. I had a song "I'm sick and tired of all the revolutions". I'm being always reminded about it, but there are certain words in this song which are not always heard by people: "I'm sick and tired of all the revolutions, and that we are not really like this, and that everything is in vain, and I'll be the truth for myself. Let's talk differently about something, I'm not afraid of anything anymore, we may still have some falseness, I'm done with the revolutions". So I had the feeling that some changes that happened were not revolutionary, they were evolutionary like. We didn't have the change of the upper class society. So the reflections in music are the same. But it didn't destroy my faith in the idea itself, in Ukraine or myself.

#### R.K.: Was the song "We are coming" written before the Orange Revolution?

M.B.: It was written in 1992. From time to time different political forces used this song, sometimes even without my permission, for their own benefits. I remember the call from Georgiy Gongadze, and I was somewhere far away, and he told me that they have used my song in the political video of some party, and asked if I was not against? I only asked whether it was not a communist party? He said, no, Yushchenko, Pynzenyk. So I said ok.

#### R.K.: Did you know Gongadze quite well?

M.B.: I did. We worked together at STB channel, I still have somewhere this video recording. I was asked to sing this song and it became the soundtrack of the Orange Maidan.

#### History

G. Gongadze

#### R.K.: Did you use to sing on stage often during that Maidan?

M.B.: Yes, very often. Though it's a bit difficult to bring back to mind the events that happened 12 years ago, I do remember that it was freezingly cold. And I acted also as a moderator and as a singer during that Maidan and the last one as well. There were situations that someone needed on the stage for the whole 24 hours, and I did it. I put myself special 'ticks' when we were singing nonstop the national anthem, and I had 15 'ticks' – that day I spent 16 hours on the stage. Then I had some rest and again the same. Of course, it's hard as you start feeling a bit dizzy. In 2004 we shared the stage with Chubai, "Tanok na Maidani Kongo", Polozhynskiy, "Mandry"...

Orange  
Revolution  
Revolution of  
Dignity  
Activity  
Musician

**R.K.: Is there a group of musicians who are always on stage during the Maidans?**

M.B.: I think there is. If we speak about women, it's me, though I'm not always noticed. D. Nishchuk is the one who is always noticed. She once told me laughing "See, we are here again". D. Nishchuk is also with us.

Orange  
Revolution  
Revolution of  
Dignity  
Actors

**R.K.: And these are the musicians who were always excluded from the Ukrainian mainstream FM-stations, so somehow you were using the Maidans in order to bring the Ukrainian music back to Ukrainian music channels.**

Zh. Nishchuk  
S. Donii

M.B.: Of course. And it's not only about the format of music. It's not about us on the Ukrainian music channels, it's about the Ukrainian music itself, about its actual presence and existence. From 2011 till 2013 I made a program on TVi channel "Music for Adults". Three music groups usually took part in this program – the so called evening with around the kitchen table, with some talks. I invited different groups – famous, young, playing classical music, sometimes there were quite unexpected duets, Myroslava Kotorovych, Siuzanna Chekhoian and Bohdana Pivnenko – we don't have such programs on TV now. The program existed for three years and there was always enough musicians and musical groups to invite. There are a lot of wonderful truly Ukrainian musical groups, I do know this.

One more example for those who say that Ukrainian music doesn't exist: in 2015 the regular "Chervona Ruta" festival took place in Mariupol. I was amazed by the number of participants: 300 groups, each presenting at least three Ukrainian songs. Of course, some of them were of better quality, some – not, but still there were 900 Ukrainian songs. But these groups will never reach the professional level if our media channels proceed refusing them to stream. A certain period of time is needed so that this mechanism could really start working. Not long ago I interviewed Marta Dychok, professor of the West-Ontario University. She is an old friend of mine, and we were talking about the quotas, I turned on the microphone and recorded the interview. She said that Canada has been supporting its musician for a long period of time, and their problem is not the language but the strong neighbour and strong musical industry.

So I'm not fighting for my presence of the radio but for the presence of all those beautiful Ukrainian songs which do exist. After the events of 2013 I went to the ATO zone and many people said that they haven't heard the Ukrainian music for a very long time. Ukrainian musicians didn't come to those regions as 'there was no demand' for Ukrainian music there. And there was no demand cause such music was simply not streamed. And this happened because many broadcasting channels pursued the anti-Ukrainian policy as many of them are supported by the non-Ukrainian capital.

**R.K.: After the Orange Revolution president Yushchenko used to appoint the members of the Regions Party on the positions of the heads of the local administrative bodies in Donetsk and Lugansk regions, and these politicians didn't let pro-Ukrainian music and culture reach these regions, there was a real cultural blockade there...**

M.B.: You are absolutely right. And I'm sure that there was some special pro-Russian propaganda which laid ground for the situation that after all happened. To give all this a broader view – I was not only fighting for Ukrainian music, I was trying to support music that would give food for thoughts. I wanted to increase the number of Ukrainian channels. For instance, if you come to many other countries they always have channels dedicated specifically to classical music. People who vote against music quotas say that there is not enough truly Ukrainian music for the niche

broadcasting stations. But the question is: do we really have niche broadcasting channels?? We don't have any cultural or educational projects that would help Ukrainian culture flourish.

**R.K.: So that music could also have its mission.**

M.B.: It already has. We have different musicians who play different music, popular music, for instance, the "Territory A" stage once played a very important role. There should be also dancing music, and music for thinking. Our radio stations don't stream, for instance, Taras Petrenenko any more – as a result the new generations don't know him at all. You can hear the songs of Eric Lepton in America, or Sting in Britain, but you can't hear Petrenenko in Ukraine. All this issues – national, economic, cultural – all urged us to join Maidan. Besides this I felt that it was right to be there, it was fair and I was thinking as many other people who went there, who joined Maidan, and I just had to be there as an artist, and as an ordinary person who believed in it. There are certain things which I really can do, and I do them. This was my part of work and that's how I thought about it.

Bringing back in mind the last revolution, there was one situation when certain events happened, I wet my feet and my brother came to me, he had also wet his feet, and said that he was going back to Maidan. It was two a.m. and I told him that I would take him there by car. We went there with our bare feet in the boots, I live quite close. It was one day before that moment when the Berkut soldiers began to force the people back down Luteranska street, December 10. Parubii saw me and said – 'it's good you are here, Ruslana has already gone, so take the stage'. And I moderated till 10 a.m. wearing jeans and boots put on my bare feet.

\*\*\*\*\*

## REVOLUTION OF DIGNITY

**R.K.: The song "He walks on the water", January 2014 – what does it mean to you?**

M.B.: For a long time I was haunted by the phrase "he walks on the water" as well as by some prayers. A prayer is always appropriate. Actually it was that moment, connected with social life,



when I just started to pray for everything to settle down, to be good. I remember the moment that I saw on TV when Zhenia Nyshchuk moderated by calling: go to the scene. I remember myself there and how Parubii said to me: Don't be afraid, we know what to do. And it was necessary to play it cool, to hide that I was afraid. In such moments there comes a prayer.

And when on January 22 first people were killed I finished this song and recorded it. Again, where can it be heard today in the media space?

**R.K.: Do you have any allies? It seems that most producers, top managers think by Moscow categories ....**

M.B.: We are trying to bring up this type of producer. But the producers who are tied to Moscow understand that their position is the ability to earn much more money than at the inner Ukrainian market. And show business as a business needs new investments. Therefore, those "our" managers cannot compete and need some state support and regulation. Instead they are talked to from a position of strength. Our performers deserve extreme respect, but they are not a business, and the recent discussion of the law on quotas showed that there is fierce resistance. They are put forward as a goal to shoot, so I think that we should go the other way. In due time, there was ballyhoo for compulsory dubbing in Ukrainian, and where is this ballyhoo now? Everybody got used to it. That is why there must be certain regulation in protecting Ukrainian producer. Though fighting continues, not so many people are on the front line - in the last two Maidans were more or less the same people on stage, plus a few new bands, like Kozak system, for example. And my personal life in Ukraine is not that simple, I know that I am expected to give battle every day, but I'm thinking about a new course of chemotherapy for my father.

I wish there were more musicians with a concrete position so that I could understand that there's somebody behind me.

**R.K.: And what is your attitude towards the position of those Ukrainian musicians who are good at their works and speak Ukrainian speakers, but are against Maidans, considering evolution to be better than revolution?**

M.B.: Actually I'm not sure as well that if there is a new Maidan, I'll be there. Maybe in 2013 I also thought that I wouldn't go to any of the Maidans, but I did because I realized that my place was there. If a musician's position is sincere, deliberate and reasoned why he doesn't want to be at Maidan or elsewhere at the moment, then it is the absolute right of every person. The main thing is that a person did something, and not disguised by actions of others. This is not fair. We do not consider the situation on the whole but each individual case. "Do Maidans decide nothing?" - Maybe.

**R.K.: Let's take the concrete field of culture: did Maidans help launch such reforms thanks to which culture could earn money and the implementation of cultural diplomacy could start. Are they evident?**

M.B.: Now Ukraine is in the war, and it is difficult to speak about reforms in the field of culture, without involving certain funds, that are missing. So far, show business didn't depend on the cultural process. What it will be, I do not know. We have huge economic recession, in all fairness; people cannot afford to go to concerts often, especially employees of government-financed organizations - doctors, teachers, intellectuals. To perform in Poltava without involving additional funds, ticket price must be quite high in order to cover expenses on moving, sound, light, technical staff and salaries for musicians. And people on the brink of poverty, they do not know how to pay for public services.

**R.K.: Some steps by Kyrylenko, Vice Prime Minister on issues of Humanitarian Policy, who is a star of the very first Revolution on the granite, are criticized as folk, unbalanced and short-sighted. Are there among the cultural elite people who can promote changes?**

M.B.: Lately I'm not that person with a strong team spirit. I'm not well informed about what is happening and who could lead that process. Though I'm doing a cultural TV project, I know what is happening in the city and in Ukraine, what the trends and events are and who is really advancing this progress – everyone, actually, does it in his own way. As a rule, this is "a person-name-brand", for example Vladyslav Troitskyi, or operetta festival organizer Strutynskyi. There

are individuals who despite everything find some mechanisms for financing by means of the Ministry of Culture or without and move this cultural layer forward. But it is difficult to imagine people uniting for something, all the more on a voluntary basis. People are so tired of volunteering, of various public activities that I cannot imagine what can motivate them. Nobody wants to gather together and develop strategies. Although the Ministry of Culture worked on the long-term strategy of development of Ukrainian culture and I was involved in the process and suggested some ideas, I do not know whether they were used. I have my own plan, I know that many people look at me, and these are reputation moments. I was told: we see you in talk shows and are happy that you are. We are developing and some of my thoughts too. It's not that I found them false, 100% one-dimensional, but essentially the philosophy, vision of me in Ukraine does not change. I concluded that I should go on television even when the conversation is not connected with the cultural policy. I must appear because my very presence in space gives forces to some people.

**R.K.: Can we say that some irreversible changes are happening in Ukraine?**

M.B.: As for me, it is increasingly unclear what is happening in the East of Ukraine. Ukraine continues to live its life. In Lviv there is held "Alfa Jazz", sponsored by the Russian Alfa-Bank. When I protested, I was written that it is a "celebration of music and beauty" and it does not concern the war, that this bank is private and so on, and so forth. And for Europe it looks like a Russian bank holds a great jazz festival. Then against whom are our boys fighting in the East of Ukraine? Isn't it a manifestation of Putin's ideology imposing the idea that in Ukraine there is a civil war? Therefore, in this situation it is unknown how it will develop further, where it goes, how it must end - whether it will be a conserved conflict ... I can't imagine Ukraine without these regions, I cannot say - let them separate, though I also realize that it is also wrong to join and protect the interests of those people who do not see themselves with Ukraine, because our people are dying, our soldiers are killed. And most of those people probably do not want to join. At the same time - whose fault is that people do not consider themselves to be a part of Ukraine? Was there a favorable environment for developing the feeling of being a part of Ukraine and its culture? I do not come from those areas, I am from Kharkiv and when I was growing up the

environment there was radically unfavorable. I am rather an exception to the rule than the rule. It's a very complicated matter, but to say that there are no irreversible processes, I can't. Unfortunately, I do not know what will happen as the final result.

I gave and I am giving my life for Ukraine to stay Ukraine. My role is micron. I am a drop in the ocean. But anyway, I am doing it. I am doing it for the development of Ukrainian culture and in television process, in a TV project, in creating an album for children because there are few Ukrainian songs for children. In cooperation with Ivan Franko National Academic Drama Theater we staged a play with children songs and now I am writing again a children's album. I have many thanks for it, "I can be a dog, I can be a cat" - children sing it in kindergartens. Although in terms of show business it is a failed project with only investment with no income. I'll do it in the future, this path is not strewn with roses and benefits, but it's my decision. Up to a certain point, I participated in public activities, now I get involved only in such activities that cannot happen without me – according to my feelings. And when I see the hypocrisy, I don't waste myself on it. I have such a category as conscience and it guides me, although I cannot say that I always do right things, that I have never missed the mark, that my example can be followed. No, I'm flesh and blood, I have a lot of weaknesses and I do not always act right. Looking back, I recognize my mistakes. But I can act by myself – write, create. I can see kids leaving Franko Theatre after watching my play "Mama said no" and singing my songs. And it was only 12 performances during school holidays. It will be performed. There are 100 thousand viewings of the recorded version on the internet. These children will grow up and will teach their children these songs. Because parents teach children the songs they know. And maybe I will not live then. That is the efficiency factor is maximum that can be imagined. This is if you want to get to eternity, and I'm not talking about my famous stuff.

**R.K.: That is, we may say that civil society develops also thanks to the new Ukrainian culture.**

M.B.: Yes, but first of all thanks to the work of a number of devotees. Ukrainian culture is generally something amorphous and incomprehensible; it is not clear what it consists of, what constitutes the Ministry of Culture that is supposed to be in charge of it. But at every level there

are more or less public, but still devotees. There are people whom we see and they, despite everything, follow their way, for instance, Taras Petrynenko. And there are people, whom we cannot know, like the head of a regional theater or someone active in the village. For example, Oleksii Zaiets from Zhytomyr region who participated in the "Voice of the Country" brought old women from the village and was singing authentic folklore with them while we were shooting some plot at Honchar Museum. When I went on expeditions I couldn't gather such old women because they need someone to govern them. And this 25-year-old boy can! This folklore is alive, it is sung! And perhaps thanks to such people Ukraine will exist, because not always my thoughts are so optimistic.

Whenever I am abroad, in another society, I try to explain our situation, and I understand that some of my steps or steps of my colleagues were illogical. Logic and explanations are not enough. Why do you find yourself at night on Maidan? You won't explain. Why you believe this person at the time of dramatic events. No. You operate with such concepts as intuition, feeling of hypocrisy. It's hard to explain to people who were not here and do not understand different semitones.

**R.K.: Maybe these people have a stereotypical vision of Ukraine as a divided nation that is ruled by Americans?**

M.B.: I think little interest. Who will be interested in the problems, mentality, behavior motivation of people living in a far Eastern European country, which is still quite unclear floundering in its history for two years and no one knows where the finish is. Only an expert or a person who has sentiment will try to understand, though it will be problematically being far from Ukraine. We must understand that there is a certain community, there are certain biographies of people who are at times together, at others scattered to different sides of the barricades. We are here in the sense of the situation in the Eastern regions and occupying forces. As if we are fighting for the language, and at the same time so many Russian-speaking soldiers are fighting for Ukraine there. And we understand that use of Russian and they admit it, not because they do not want [Ukrainian], but because the state did not give it to them in due time. They can speak beautiful words and have high aspirations, but when relaxing they can listen to Russian "chanson". It is complicated, and we understand that. Life is not one-dimensional, it is multi-dimensional, and

there are many nuances. In Ukraine there are often situations when people find themselves on opposite sides of moral barricades. But exclusively moral, because everyone understands that Ukraine is going through outside intervention, not inside.

When I enter into a debate, I am hard to stop. I explain using examples; I have photos from ATO, stories in store. My authority and reputation also help. I am trusted and believed, though, of course, I have no reasons to tell a lie. Our patriotism to some extent is illogical. When I come back from abroad and hear old women Kriachkivka village singing, the tears start rolling down my face - how can I explain it? What am I missing? - XVIII century Ukraine? Or that the old lady was once a young girl and is singing about her lost love? What? Musical intervals and this musical singing? Not clear. It touches some strings of my soul. For many people coming to Maidans and telling that they love Ukraine, it's not just words. This is not to wear an embroidered shirt ('vyshyvanka'), it's not waving the flag. This is to do something and feel it in your heart. It is hard not to stray into some cliché, hackneyed phrases, but I am not able to find the other words.

There are situations when I drive a car to Odessa across whole Ukraine. I do not travel a lot, but sometimes it is necessary. And I stop when I see these steppes, I want to lie down and hug this land. I am an adult modern, to some extent cynical person. But I want to cry when I see this beauty, I am a part of this, I feel it.