

**ALBANIAN MUSIC DEVELOPMENTS  
AND ITS FOLKLORIC ELEMENTS****Music (performance)**

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**Armira Kapxhiu**

Professor at the University of Arts, Tirana.

**Abstract**

Albanian folk music is presented with inalienable value. Albanian folk music presents a rich heritage and varied in styles, in modes of singing, in varieties of folk instruments of rhythms. It expresses its originality, first of all, in the modal-intonation system. It is built on four main tonal systems: pentatonic (that is found commonly in polyphony folk creations), diatonic (which, as a rule, is found in homophonic creations), chromatic building (generally on city folk music) and enharmonic construction (mostly in folk vocal music and in a part of instrumental music, mainly to what is executed through non-tempered wind tools. As an especially important melodic element of Albanian folklore are folk ions, that in our opinion have been, are, and will be an important source of support for professional composers in their creations, in different periods of history, the present and the future, and for this reason we considered it as important to stop in one of their analysis.

**Introduction**

Ions<sup>3</sup> of folk music are numerous and varied as in the modo-tonal direction, also by their ambitus<sup>4</sup>. They are explored through alternating sounds in a linear fashion and skipping between two or more sounds near and far. The simpler are the ions, the more limited is their extension.

In Albanian folklore they may be: dichord and trichord, tetrachord, pentachord, hexachord, septachord three-tonic, tetra-tonic pentatonic, hexatonic, heptatonic. It has to be admitted that many folk ions are discussed in the hepta-tonic scale, consisting of 7 tones, but with different construction modes, such as Lydian, Dorian, mixolydian, Phrygians, Aeolian. Seven sounds of these rates can be ranges as those of the Greco-Roman musical system. Starting from each of these natural sounds, are built special scales, with different tonic. These particular instances of scales by seven sounds are called modes. Besides, we stayed in the review of folk meters, dealing with mixed measures. In Albanian folklore these are 8 dividers, 9 dividers, 10 dividers, 11 dividers, 12 dividers, 13 dividers, 14 dividers, 16 dividers and measures on a large scale and free rhythms. As regards to the rhythm movement, in all measures that go into free rhythms from the slower ones (adagio, largo, lento), expressing a heavy, wide and deep spirit of intermediate movements, to the quick movements full of joy in our folk music we have a scale, almost infinite, with all kinds of

<sup>3</sup> By the term ions of folk music, is meant its melody.

<sup>4</sup> Ambitus is the diapason extension that traverses a melody within its developmental boundaries. Another important folkloric element are the Albanian folk instruments, as well as their role in the life of the Albanian people. We include this in this paper, because through organ-logic studies it can be penetrated even the inclination or the taste of the music of our people and at the same time, we can look at some of the complex issues of our musical folklore. Having submitted comprehensive information about musical instruments that our people use, they will not be seen simply as a means to extract sounds but will be seen as organisms that have their own history, related to the lifestyle of the people and reflect circumstances or material conditions of the areas where they are used.

agogic nuances, which includes pauses and long or short stops, with hurried and slowdowns, especially from the end of ions.

We can mention some of them as: the drum, bagpipe, double flute, nozzles, lute, harmonica, cifteli, etc.

We would like to emphasize that in addition to genuine folklore, there is a different experience, such as the folkloric movement (folk outside its circulation realities, folk processing and stylization<sup>5</sup>), from which it is obtained and has more and more opportunities for the Albanian composers foothold.

Musical art as a form of artistic expression is among the most important and spread components of our national, traditional culture. As part of the cultural unity of our people, the Albanian musical art through the centuries has reflected the diversity of senses and spiritual expressions of our people. Albanians throughout centuries-long history have proven that despite being brave and freedom-loving, they manifested high moral virtues and highlighted spiritual values. The talent to reflect artistically and express emotional realities of culminating part of the long and glory history and efforts for freedom and survival, and social life of our people makes to reason that Albanians are a vital people, talented art lovers. Historically among Albanians, in different periods of their historical development, are displayed individualities that have created verses of songs, interpreted in musical instruments and, in addition, also sang. Their song has always accompanied Albanians, at war, at work and in family joys. Through the song Albanians transmitted important aspects of their ancient history. And this happened continuously, so it can be said that the Albanian music is the most important components of our cultural tradition. It is as old as Albanians themselves, the ancestors of whom, Arber and before them Illyrians, situated in the Balkan peninsula, lived, worked, fought over the millennia, and created their art, which passed on to their successors. Albanian cultivated music is shown relatively late if we can in highlight the Illyrian and middle Ages period the musical creativity of Niket Dardan and Jan Kukuzeli. Although these two personalities of world music were of Albanian origin, they carried out their activity away from the land of our ancestors. According to researchers of this field the musical creativity among Albanians starts with Father Martin Gjoka, if we may consider him as a person who contributed in pre-professional Albanian music. But it must be admitted that works of composers have been brought and had an active life very late in the Albanian realities. It took too long for works of different musical genres to be present in Albanian areas.

Just to bring this musical creative continuity of Albanians and their ancestors, we pass on to the strands and the development of Albanian cultivated music. This is because in general explanation of origins and development of the Albanian cultivated music is the best case that

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<sup>5</sup> More thoroughly view A. Xhagolli, "Albanian folklore contemporary", Albanological Studies Center, Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Art Study, Tirana, 2013, pp. 71 – 147.

demonstrates the way followed by Albanian creators continuously, bringing their support in the folklore creativity.

*Albanian Music in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* initially is expressed regarding the music of our ancestors, the Illyrians, in terms of the modal system of their music. Note that this can be judged mainly by the structure of folk ions with many archaic features. Ions of this nature show that the Illyrian music must have been discussed with crippled ranges, which reach up to hexachord, as well as the old diatonic modal scales (Phrygian, Dorian, Aeolian, Ionian, Lydian and MixoLydian). It is very difficult to talk today about the different types of Illyrian songs, for their themes, the quality of music, etc. But, in an abstraction, it can be said that they mainly involve different areas of beliefs and practices of the people, as there were different types of songs, such as; ritually (lamentations), had songs essentially mythical, songs devoted to deities, songs to brave people and heroes etc., which, of course, were fit to developments and psychology of the time.

Our ancestors, the Illyrians and then the Arber, had generally a high degree of cultural development and of musical art in particular. Besides the other peoples of the continent of the peninsula, they cultivated various arts and among them also music. In all these developments their levels were comparable to the developing standards of other nations. On this development the musicologist and aesthete, Prof. Dr. Fatmir Hysi, in his book “Popular music flow of Albanian music,” writes: “*Musical Forms of society in antiquity had of course, a considerable degree of cultivation, because such was the ancient Illyrian society, which stands with dignity beside the Greek and Roman society*”<sup>6</sup>.

**Musical developments during the Renaissance, the national declaration of independence until the end of World War II**, brings next a more general analysis of musical developments in these two periods. In the Albanian music in the Renaissance and Independence period were considered as laying the foundations of the development of cultivated music especially the vocal one, whose beginnings belong to two decades at the end of the XIX century, right after the Prizren League in 1878, which became the impetus for cultural development, Albanian language and literature, to school, etc. In addition, also for the new music in Albania which in those years was in synchronous with the patriotic ideals of Renaissance? The distinctive characteristic of the music of these periods is flourishing of the music genre, as one of the simplest and democratic forms.

The cultivated, Patriotic song of the Renaissance and Independence period was established primarily in city environments. Its development was oriented in two directions: the patriotic and lyric-erotic one. Between these two directions priority in the creation and greater spread had the

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<sup>6</sup> F. Hysi, “Albanian folk music streams”, SHBLU, Tirana, 1991, p. 39.

patriotic direction, which shows the importance and special interest in the development of vocal music of the time period that includes the Renaissance and Independence.<sup>7</sup>

The first stage is represented by the extension of the cultivated patriotic song of the Renaissance and Independence which starts from the League of Prizren to mid-20s of the last century. The second stage is represented by the extension of developed vocal forms such as folk songs processing, vocal rhapsodic, vocal suites etc., starting from the late 20s onwards. The third stage is represented by the extension of concert vocal forms, opera and stage, and the largest development was after the liberation of the country and during the second half of the last century.

In spreading the songs of these two periods an important role had the activities of Wind Orchestra (band) and various formations of vocal groups. During the musical developments of the first two decades of the last century, when conditions were mature for a new development in the Albanian music, cultivated patriotic songs of Renaissance and Independence became the main part of the repertoire of vocal formations. Wind orchestras in our country, starting from scratch, which was formed in Shkodra in 1878, took development and had huge spread around the country.

During the period after Independence, between 1912-1939, the Albanian music especially the vocal one, was followed by vigorous developments. Besides professionalism phenomena, vocal music of this period took great spread nationwide through rich concert activities. An important role in its spread played patriotic clubs and artistic-cultural societies, which represent the first musical institutions in the country.

**The Albanian Music after World War II up to the 90s of XX century**, specifically the one of the second half of XX century, is up to now the most important chapter of Albanian music. And this is because in this period the Albanian music entered into the development process as an authentic professional art. As for the ages that preceded, and in particular that of Independence, we can say that we are dealing with an era of pre-professional Albanian music. In this aspect we dealt with the music creativity of Martin Gjoke, Thoma Nasi, Fan Noli, but, on the other hand, in the '30s of the last century gave birth an important period for Albanian music, the professional concert activity. In that period returned to Albania from studies abroad singers, like Tefta Tashko Koço, Jorgjie Truja, Mihal Ciko, Kristaq Antoni, tenor Kristo Koço, pianist Lola Gjoka etc., who contributed to the establishment of professionals interpretations. They conducted many concerts in different cities. But all these were not enough to meet the demands for the formation of a tradition because were missing musical schools and institutions, which would prepare formed musicians, and institutions that would take over the organization of cultural life, as opera theaters up to the actual concert halls.

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<sup>7</sup> "Albanian music history", Authors Group, Tiranë, 1983, pg. 8.

All musicians of the time, that composed music, did not complete education in the relevant field. Palok Kurti and Fran Ndoja were autodidact; Father Martin Gjoka was only educated for a theologian; Thoma Nasi had as a first profession that of a conductor; Noli, who was the only one who went to the conservatory, but in a very old age, created his works abroad, and therefore they had no spread.

Albania's musical life after the Second World War, namely that of the second half of XX century, is associated with the formation of artistic institutions and the formation of several generations of professional musicians from different fields. From Albania a group of talented young people were sent to pursue higher studies at the Moscow Conservatory. Some of them later returned to Albania and had the burden of establishing and organizing institutions. Among them we can mention: Çesk Zadeja, Tish Daija, Tonin Harapi, Nikola Zoraqi, Kozma Lara, Pjetër Gaci, and the singers: Gaqo Çako, Avni Mulaj, Ramiz Kovaci, Ibrahim Tukiçi, Mentor Xhemali, etc.

In 1964 the State Conservatory opened in Tirana, which later, after 4 years, became part of the Higher Institute of Arts, University of the Arts today. First musicians graduated in this university brought a new part of the Albanian music and became known as the second generation of Albanian musicians. Among them we can mention names such as: Gjon Simoni, Limoz Dizdari, Shpëtim Kushta, Thoma Gaqi, Kujtim Laro; instrumentalists, such as; Anita Tartari, Margarita Kristidhi, Zhani Ciko, Ibrahim Madhi etc.

Later generations of musicians were formed continuously. But it was a period when ideological role and influence in music was great. On socialist realism in art, also in music, one can argue long, but it must be said that in the case of Albanian music from that period are more complex problems and should not be seen with the same specs. The titles of works often were put set by others and not by the composers themselves. While opera and ballet, having as basis the libretto, underwent an even stronger control. At the same time, it should be noted that there were many creations that came out schemes and political frames of the time. So, all these works and other ones, despite being created in a difficult period, coercive and obligatory, were examined for their contribution to our music. The truth is that not everything that was created in this period was achieved by applying the requirements of ideological viewpoint.

Albanian music, specifically that of the second half of the twentieth century, for a more precise chronologically, can be divided into several phases. The first one started in 1956 when Çesk Zadeja composed his first symphony. This phase lasts 10 years and contains a number of important works, which can be considered the foundation stone for the further development of Albanian music. Such may include: opera "Mrika", the concert for violin and orchestra of Pjetër Gaci, Sonatina for piano of Tonin Harapi, the ballet "Halili and Hajria" of Tish Daia etc. These works express the main orientation for Albanian music of the time. They rely on traditional models with Classic-romantic type, of the XVIII-XIX century. On the other hand, they also testify

the efforts to the integration in the music Albanian of native folk tradition. Çesk Zadeja created on this basis and is named as the father of professional music.

The second phase begins in 1967, when in Tirana started the annual concerts in May, which aimed the development of creativity and interpretation of new talent. On the political side, due to the exit from the Warsaw Pact, there was a pretty liberal spirit in the creations of time and in this spirit are composed the ballet "Cuca e Maleve" of Nikola Zoraqi, and No. 1 Concert for piano of Feim Ibrahim. The last work opened fierce debate if we had to do with a decadent or novatory work. This situation changed in 1973, when in the political debates was raised a demand for involvement and leadership in the arts by the parties. There were many debate and critics. In music criticism were focused on 11<sup>th</sup> Festivan in ART, which served as the main cause against mainly to progressive artists. Not surprisingly, the most preferred genre of the time became Rhapsody. But anyway, it can be said that the issue of finding a language of national identity, for composers who sought to find authenticity in folklore was not a matter of ideological point. It should be emphasized that in this period music, art and culture experienced their largest isolation. Some of the most important works of this period include: Sonata for violin and piano by Çesk Zadeja, Dubelconcert for violin, cello and orchestra by Thoma Gaqi, Symphonic Poem, by Shpetim Kushta, etc.

By taking back a general look of music in Albania in the years from 1956 to 1990, it can be concluded that the Albanian music disbursed all forms of known genreknown in European tradition of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. This makes this period the most important. After 1990, the situation in Albanian music changed, creativity was freed from censorship, began the process of integration of music and were created opportunities for free initiatives.

## Conclusions

In this research paper we do not just undertake to simply bring a historical route followed by Albanian composers in the use of folk creativity, but also to precisely examine these interconnections to see the most positive experiences. To achieve this, initially we will focus on the overall coverage of some of the values and tools, techniques, and expressive possibilities of Albanian folk creativity. By viewing connections and the continuity of Illyrian – Arber – Albanian in the field of folk music, to try modestly, that on the experience until now study to convey the fact that we are dealing with a kind of folk music that had its development in continuity, giving and taking with the analogues of different peoples, mostly with the neighbors. But we emphasize that always, despite this kind of intercommunication, among Albanians consistently has operated the adaptation of any material borrowed in tastes, local practices, regional ones and more complex, national ones. We brought this issue to enable and express the desire that today's creators of Albanian cultivated music, despite the support in various trends of contemporary music, to benefit from folk music, to maintain the best features and characteristics, a kind of individuality of Albanian cultivated music.

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