

## Development of Instrumental Music in Albania

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### *Abstract:*

There are many opinions and studies mainly about the question of what is music. In the “New Grove” encyclopedia it is said that “Providing an acceptable definition to all and characterization of two words and the concept, is beyond the capacity of a single definition by an author.”

– “The art of sounds combination in order to make it enjoyable to the ear: – is written by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in Petit Larousse, (French encyclopedia of Larousse Publishing House).

So the major part of definitions does not consider music as a **communication system**, even a special communication established between those who play it and those who hear it.

The linguist Nicolas Ruwet considers music as “a language understandable by it self”. Of course, this is an equivocal formula, but it emphasizes that music doesn’t embody the ideas, doesn’t determine new concepts and it is unable to be analyzed or better to say described with words.

So, we can reach the conclusion that what we call music is:

- A group of sounds, with no outer meaning and reference (speaking is not music).
- Fruit of a projected activity, more or less conscious, so, an artistic process.

Meanwhile all the Albanian instrumental music can be summarized into a task that requires commitment and experience.

The object of our study in this case would be: instrumental music-room, instrumental miniatures and instrumental concerts which constitute the genres of the Albanian instrumental music.

**Keywords:** music, instrumental music, characteristics of development of the Albanian music (before and after ’90).

## **Albanian Instrumental Music**

Culture is an important part of a human's personality. But, his survival depends also from the existence of a cultural system, where develops his personality during a long and delicate process of acquisition and mental maturing.

Culture is a human's product which, inside a specific society develops altogether accepted models, to handle the social needs of the whole group.

Culture is a flexible and dynamic product, and allows a person to fit into the environment, gathering the means for survival and expressing his creativity through the continual cultural exchange.

A starting point helps in addressing an issue, the same as main motive that stimulates it. Often the themes related to the cultural creativity are stimulated by the development of a specific area, as it is the music which is closely related to the emancipated society. The curiosity, interests, desires to better know the instrumental music of our country, its protagonists, and the extension in time, how it came and took its place, where the starting points of this work.

From the information we have so far, the Albanian instrumental music, we are referring the professional one, extends from the Albanian National Rebirth to our days. An irreplaceable contribution is given by all those who studied abroad, whom brought a very important cultural baggage in this area.

The Albanian professional music was institutionalized especially after the Second World War, with the starting of many elementary and secondary schools, later even universities. But, what were the main characteristics of this music? What were some of her stages?

Culture and society are closely related concepts, made of products produced by the society, the society is made of individuals whom interact with each-other and share the same culture. In every society there is a cultural system, built on patterns of behavior that are consistent in time and are present in all geographical areas in the world, though with different characteristics.

History has never been deprived by the cultural achievements and in the last centuries the interest towards culture has been awakened. For example: Lluk Karafili in his composition “Indogermanisches Jahrbuch” vol XXIV, Year 1940, describes 26 libraries of Albania, except for that of Tabak’s Taraf in Shkodër.

The same is with the cultural movement in Voskopoja in the XVII-th century.

The history of Music in Albania, through many studies, knows many musicians, professional or not, who made a difference with their contribution, in different cultures across the centuries. In many cases they have been an important part of the cultures of our neighbour countries, but often they have directly influenced our national culture, as its founders. Albanian musicians of every time are very important, because they embodied the talent of the Albanian gene, also it has shown the ability of Albanian integration into other cultures. The end of XIX-th century and the beginning of XX-th is characterised by a series of important historical events in our country, and these events have significantly influenced the instrumental music of our country.

Our country, which was into a crossing between eastern and western cultures, was covered by a series of events that influenced the whole Albanian culture including that musical, maintaining the cultural identity and closing many periods of time as one. As a result, we can talk about the continuous efforts of our country to disconnect from the Ottoman Empire and to awake the national awareness. In this important period of our National Rebirth which was followed by an important event-independence, we can talk on one hand about the foundation of the music and at the other hand about the innovative ideas in our cultural growth.

So, differently and much later than the occidental countries of our continent, the starting of this period of time is characterised by patriotic records related to the national culture. At the border of these centuries began to show some development elements of a more advanced system, though very pale, as was the capitalist system.

In this moment of time were made some of the most important differences between the new stratum of intellectuals mainly educated in west, and the conservative tendency headed by the feudal circles.

All this contradiction was held above the lower and undeveloped part of the society, which was the majority of population. We must mention religion, which was encouraging the society development. As promoter of development we can mention the artisans and intellectuals of the

time, which supported by the poorest stratum of peasantry, challenged the feudal conservatism. This way, the city is the only element of moving forward and development. Precisely in the main cities, the development of the music was more notable. In the focus of the European development, compared to the literature movement, the music culture is even more delayed in time and level, and is mainly developed in religious environments, catholic or christian.

It is not an accident that in cities like Shkodra, Korca, Elbasani and more, receives the first reports of musical creativity distinct in some elements, and the professional tendencies compared to the folk art used in all the country.

Following the line of the Albanian instrumental music, we see the interesting fact that on 1878, exactly that year of the League of Prizren, in Shkodra was formed "the first Albanian musical band". The facts show once more that the highlights of the war for cultural identity are accompanied also by important cultural movements of all the areas.

But, we have information that in the 17<sup>th</sup> century may be even earlier; such music existed in our country. It is not an accident that the famous writer of the Ottoman Empire, Evlia Çelebi when describing the fortress of the Albanian *Beligradit* (Berat), declares that the authorities of Berat are: Reeve of Sipahis, The Commander of Janissary, Dizdar of the fortress, City Voivode, Leader of the Music Band, etc. Though we don't have more evidence of their existence, we can still reflect on this event.

If Evlia Çelebi writes about this kind of formation in the city of Berat, they must have existed even in other important cities of our country. The fact that even in Shkodra existed a formation where we think Martin Gjoka studied about the fanfare formation, convinces us about this. At this author we feel the "developed" atmosphere of Elbasan.

Didn't the family of Ismail Dedei from Elbasan come to Istanbul to be lifted at the level of the popular musicians of the time (we are talking about the period 1780 - 1840) occupying an important place in the Turkish music? Still their musical forming didn't bring anything new to the development of professional music except for performances in front of the citizens of the time. But let's see some musical facts related to this important musical period of time like the events after the year 1878, which will be one of the most important musical periods of time, related to important historical events of our country.

By doing this presentation of some of the major developments, of artistic events, to be better oriented in different stages of development of instrumental music that we are going to analyse, which of course was born and developed as a conclusion together with them.

Since it is impossible to penetrate deeper in the darkness of this process, let's give a look at the important musical facts of the period after 1878.

At 1881 Palok Kurti, writes for his band the march "Albanian Union", at 1898 Frano Ndoja created the wind orchestra of artisans and workers, at 1909 is established in Korca the Society and Wind Orchestra called "The Band of Freedom", in Elbasan the Society "Aferdita" and the Elbasan Normal School, where among other things is learned music too. At 1913 is created in Elbasan the Wind Orchestra "Aferdita", while one year earlier the Frano Ndoja's Wind Orchestra is declared the official orchestra of the Municipality of Shkodra. In 1918 in Shkodra is established the "Rozafa" society and a year later the "Bogdani" society, while Martin Gjoka writes his symphony "Two flowers on Skende'rbeg's tomb". At 1920 returns to our country Thoma Nasi and his orchestra called "Vatra" and is founded "The Society of Beautiful Arts" in Korca.

At 1924 Fan Noli and Thoma Nasi projected the establishment of Conservatory School and a Symphony Orchestra, but they couldn't achieve that. At 1930 in Gjirokastra is created the musical band, and so on, the activity of the musical organisms is grown and spread all over the country.

We did a short presentation of some of the main artistic events, for better orientation on different stages of the development of the instrumental music that we are going to study, that of course was created and developed as a conclusion of these events.

The musical culture cultivated in Albania, started to grow at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, mainly in some cities like in Shkodra, Elbasan, Gjirokastra, etc.

### *The Musical Culture in Shkodra*

Shkodra of the middle age castle, of the continual wars across the centuries, of the important relations with faith and Christian culture, witnessed in these turbulent times real cultural development compared to the other parts of our country.

But what are the reasons for the development of the culture? Many historical-geographical factors kept the relations to the occidental culture: through Austria, Italy and Papacy, as written in “Shkëndija” magazine, on 1941 in which it is stated that European cultural preparation was associated with an Albanian tradition in some cities.

The relations of the city with Vatican were established early, but these relations couldn't become part of our musical culture, because little churches of the highlands of Shkodra didn't have musical activity.

With the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire, in 1858 is inaugurated the Cathedral of Shkodra, called The Big Church, where the religious practices were accompanied with music.

Since that time, these institutions have been affected in the creation of a cultural foundation, influencing even the listeners in the high levels of the city's society.

Of course, the culture can not be imported immediately, but the connections between Shkodra and Italy, opened the door to the opportunity of creating a musical culture.

Like the case of the musician Giovanni Canale is really meaningful. His arrival in Shkodra made possible the opening of the first musical classroom in this city (1876).

The connection with Austria is really new, but in the cultural aspect-especially the musical one-it created a favorable atmosphere of communication with our Continent, spreading the taste of the occidental music of the time; mainly of waltz and Viennese operettas in the high society of the city.

Ofcourse, it is not easy to summarise this important case, and maybe it needs a whole material itself to go deeper and argue the influence of inner and outer factors in the formation of the specifics of culture in general, and especially music, in the city of Shkodra.

But let's focus a little more at Giovanni Canale, who has an historical importance in the professional musical culture of this city. There are different versions about his coming in Shkodra. One version explains his transfer there as a guest of the Papaniku family to teach music to their only child, and then Palok Kurti's, Frano Ndoja's etc, with whom he established the First Music Band in 1878.

Another story tells that he came here because of Padre Tom Marcozzi who was Italian and lived in Albania. It is believed that Marcozzi was the initiator of introducing music in church and for collecting aid for the first Band<sup>2</sup>. Giovanni Canale's work gives fruit soon at Palok Kurti who in 1880 takes charge of leadership of the musical band. So, this is the beginning of the professional

musical culture in Albania, at first didactic, executive and then even creative. So, the music spread as an executive activity, mainly fanfare, of the foreign repertoire and few compositions, mainly patriotic, like the "Albanian Union" March of P. Kurti. This author, asked by Bajram Curri, starts an orchestra in the city of Gjakova.

There were the years after the league of Prizren, and the patriotic atmosphere required such mobilizing organizations with patriotic spirit.

Following the Palok Kurti's musical compositions, we find Frano Ndoja, leader of the city's orchestra and author of many compositions for the orchestra and also civic songs.

At the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, at the musical scene of Shkodra we see also other important figures like Martin Gjoka, Mikel Koliqi, Lec Kurti, Krist Maloki, Dom Zef Shestani etc.

Different compositions widened more and more range of genres mainly vocal that goes from songs to melodrama or the first attempts for the opera. All these creations were supported by several generations of singers which by adding more and more musical instruments, embrace and develop more the technical abilities toward professionalism.

The musical culture has started and consolidated in Shkodra, creating besides **beano's** men of the city, also many musicians with a high professional level, who supported by Catholic culture and its circles, created an atmosphere of interpretation and production that stood out significantly from other corners of the country.

### *Musical culture in Korca*

In contrast with Shkodra, Korca and its surroundings had a tradition of emigration that helped financially, but also imported the outside culture of east or west. Also the important connections of this city with the Rumanian culture and then the start of the French protectorate (1916), gave important stimulus to development. In the Korca's newspaper it is written (September 1920): Korca region was administrated with european methods under the leadership of Frenchman. (French high command).

So, some years later than Shkodra, in 1909, in Korca started the first musical band, as an important musical event leaded by Paskal Anibal. The activities of the artistic companies of the time with the organisation of little theatrical, musical, vocal shows, etc. became the initiators and the foundation of this formation called "The band of Freedom". This meaningful name reminds

us of the difficult political situation of Korca at that time. In danger of the Greek invasion, and betrayed as the whole country by the Turkish, the patriotic character of our people blooms in all areas. So, the band of freedom goes through some of the main national events.

At 1920, "Vatra" Musical Band made of Albanian emigrants came from America and vitalised greatly the musical life of the city. Thoma Nasi, who took charge of the musical lead as a professional, oriented music towards new developments. So, in Korca began to identify instrumentalists and singers through choral and fanfare groups that started to blossom.

The coming of the "Vatra" Musical Band was followed by programs made of solo performances. In one of the programs, on June 11, 1922, L. Meyer "Bilbili" solo draws attention the performance of Z. Morçka with his small flute. On July, in a concert given at the "Themistokli Germenji" garden, is written: Withrow, Trombonium, Solo with Trombonet (asked by the audience for the second time within the year). The relationship of the music with the church is complicated. Though through the years the music of the orthodox procession influenced the musical terrain of the people, at this time, when are created the conditions and requirements for development, in contrast with the catholic one in Shkodra, the Greek one in Korca, it doesn't give concrete help, and in some directions has been a serious obstacle because of its orthodoxy.

The Albanian societies and schools where closed and prohibited, but even the society of their political parties that started at the time of Turkish invasion were stopped by the Greek propaganda. Greeks when coming to Korca wanted darkness for the people and to make them fanatics of the religion. In contrast to Shkodra, the societies in Korca were secular.

### *Musical culture in Elbasan*

The musical culture of the time in the city of Elbasan, though there were some unique cultural factors, it was poorer than Shkodra and Korca, but in May 1909 in Elbasan started the first cultural societies. At the same year started the first high school in Albania called "Normal School" (Shkolla Normale) which played an important role in the cultural life of this city. The music education in this school, though in the beginner level, became the foundation for the start of different mandolin and vocal formations, besides those of theatre and literature. On 1917 was created the "Aferdita" Wind Orchestra, under the direction of Ahmet Gashi. The musical creativity was blooming, starting with Thanas Flloqi and followed by Filip Pojani. Also an



important role was played by the musical leader, Sofokli Papparisto. Still, music in Elbasan, supported by cultural societies and the “Normal School” remained at the interpretation level.

The time of World War 2 made the musical activity silent in all the cities.

At the end of this study I would say that the foundation of the the first steps of instrumental music in our country are closely depended by the historical background of this country, and the important events of that time became the most important motives of this music.

The main cities where this music startet and bloom were Korca, Shkodra and Elbasani which at the time were the most developed cities. Still, the cultural development wouldn't have a stable character if the rules of passing it from one generation to the other wouldn't exist and be respected fom Albanian society and beyond.

Lastly, I would say that the Albanian society has its own culture, meaning a series of values combined together in order to make our culture more unique, part of which is the instrumental music culture.