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***Këngë Korçare: Song Making and Musical Culture
in the City of Korçë during the Twentieth Century***

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To the loving memory of my grandapas

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Faleminderit!

Introduction

I

This research is focused on a song repertoire that has been widely performed in the city of Korçë during the twentieth century. Korçë has been distinguished as an important center in the region with a relevant contribution in the history of Albanian nation.¹ *Këngë Korçare* (Korçare Songs) have been heard and sung in public and private performances, in formal and informal settings, so acquiring a singular status in people's life. They were conceived as belonging to the city, engendering the attribution of *Korçare*, that is, from Korçë. This perceived status made my research evolve as the study of an urban repertoire and a city.

I grew up hearing and singing these songs as part of my own life experiences. I appreciated - as musician - the expressive melody, the simple chordal harmonies, and the enlivened atmosphere they created in different events. This familiarity made me hesitant to undertake scholarly research about the songs and my birthplace. During the course of my research, I visited and lived in other cities; sometimes distant and contrasting with Korçë, others close and familiar. The wide geography of cities did not leave me indifferent: beginning with Milan, where my PhD studies were settled, to New York, Boston, Phila-

1. Korça is the largest urban center in southeast Albania and one of the country's main cities. The region is bordered by Greece and FYROM (Macedonia). It is positioned between two rather historically contested regions: Epir and Macedonia. People speak the Tosk dialect in a slight local patois.

delphia and then Lisbon, Sofia, Thessaloniki, and Pavia. And while moving from one place to another, the link with one city remained contiguous. As Constantine Cavafy wrote:

The city will be following you. In the same streets
you'll wander. And in the same neighborhoods you'll age,
[...]
Always in this same city you'll arrive.²

I did not always arrive in the same city, but cannot say that it was always a different one. The musical events taking place in these locations contributed to evoking and organizing my thoughts. Parallel to this, my first fieldwork encounters gradually dissipated the diffidence, making me realize that the possibility of exploring the “taken-for-granted”, the thing one (thinks) she knows “from the inside” can be equally perplexing and challenging as the foreign. Now that this “journey” seems almost finished and the research accomplished - at least for the moment - I would say that on the foreground of these narratives are my experiencing of music, people, places, and books.

II

My initial surveys on the research project encompassed the last twenty years. During this period, these songs have been performed a lot. Popular singers from Korçë but nationally renowned, have recorded them becoming identified in some cases as performers *par excellence*.³ The pieces were heard live in bars, tavern venues and lately, they are gradually acquiring the attributes of a tourist attraction.

A revival process that started in the early 1990s nurtured this reality. During the communist regime (1946-1990), the history of these songs followed different dynamics. A part of the repertoire was popularized and disseminated through official national media by a male ensemble known as *Lira* group. Be-

2. Cavafy 2007: 29

3. I would cite for example Ermira Babaliu, Eli Fara, Mimoza Paraveli. (See Glossary). And the albums: Eli Fara. Nostalgi. Tetovo: Fuga [No Serial Number], 1996; Mimoza Paraveli. Harroje, Harroje. Gostivar: Studio Ha-Ha Gostivar [no serial number], ca. 1998; Ermira Kola. Qyteti i Ēndrrave. Tiranë: Eurostar [no serial number], ca. 1999.

ginning in the 1960s, a number of prohibiting measures were employed for banishing the outdoor serenading and street singing of young males, a very popular performance in the city up to that period. Song practice continued to animate people's lives in informal events as a latent condition. The repertoire remained "active" and popular among the urban-dwellers. The revival of the early 1990s, fueled by an emergent commercial reality, promoted these songs for wider audiences.

This situation captivated me. I envisaged a project where I could discuss a number of topics, such as the commercial reality, the music idioms that shaped these pieces as studio music productions, the post-communist social life, mobility, migration, and regional music influences. A few primary sources dating from the communist rule period and brief oral accounts from elderly protagonists made me re-consider my ideas.

Another view emerged. It looked limited in terms of documented sources, but still promising and attention-grabbing in terms of what people had to say about it. One of the main reasons that made me consider the case was the place this song practice had in collective memory. The discussion went far beyond the official and banned aspect. It pertained to the way the latter permeated people's lives from the early twentieth century. The songs had a different 'social life' until the early 1990s, and had different protagonists that found only a partial space in its actual representation. The situation was closely related to the history of the city and the main events that distinguished it during the twentieth century. I chose therefore to focus on the historical framework.

My research combined primary sources found in archives and libraries with the ones coming from fieldwork. As previously mentioned, the primary sources in the remnant archives of artistic institutions were in a poor physical condition. Lack of administrative strategies for conservation and documentation has caused maladministration and mishandling in the past twenty years.⁴ In turn, private collectors and antiquarians have been much more active in

4. The uprisings in the year 1997 brought an irreparable damage to materials found in the cultural state institutions that were unguarded for a long time.

gathering disparate materials. Use of these sources was helpful but made always necessary a careful crosscheck for materials' consistency.⁵

The most significant contribution to the outcomes of this work were the sources drawn from private and family archives. They belonged to people I contacted and worked with during fieldwork and included photographs, personal diaries, handwritten notes, and music recordings dating back to the early 1900s. The retrieval of these sources came by means of interviews and conversations. These materials required a careful revision of the working stages concerning the information exchange and its further documentation and interpretation. For this, I found appropriate relying on 'oral history' method.⁶ Yet, as Lynn Abrams observes "[o]ral history has become a crossover methodology, an octopus with tentacles reaching into a wide range of disciplinary, practice-led and community enterprises."⁷

The method developed in the course of my research was a way of "recovery history mode"⁸ of oral history. The aim was to obtain information and provide evidences that could not be retrieved through standard documentary sources. Information gathered about the activity of cultural institutions was particularly useful. Most of the ethnographic stages evolved through interviews, colloquies and conversations with individuals, but not all of them were intended as oral history interviews. Those that were conceived as such centered on the reconstruction of concrete events and activities. For the majority of the cases, a longer time of dialogue exchange was invested. The same can be said about the aftermath: checking their accounts with documentary sources, interpreting their reports, and revising the materials they willingly shared with me.

When it comes to *Këngë Korçare*, it is not exaggerating to say that every Korçar sings them. Nevertheless, this research delineated primarily a group of

5. I would cite here as the most important case the private digitalization of 78rpms discs with Albanian music. To be included are also photographs, video materials, typewritten documents, or publications. Each of the materials used as source has been crosschecked for reliability.

6. On oral history see more in particular Abrams 2010; Perks, Thomson 1998; DeBlasio et al. 2009

7. Abrams 2010: 2

8. Abrams 2010: 5

protagonists that were concomitant to this practice. The latter represented my chief acquaintances in reconstructing the history of this repertoire. This made necessary a glossary of names found at the end of this dissertation alongside the detailed list of conversations and meetings.

My approach shares many elements in common with ethnohistory and ethnomethodology.⁹ It is concomitant with the role that ethnographic methods may exert in soliciting insights and observations about the past¹⁰, about historical events, customs, and quotidian realities. What came out of my fieldwork experience was an excursion from the present to a socio-cultural context belonging to the past. Collective and individual memory greatly impacted on the 'life cycles' of these songs and the ways they were shared and preserved. This necessitated going beyond oral history methods and take in consideration the theoretical contributions of memory studies and remembering. Memory studies represented a theoretical pathway for better grasping the negotiation between the past and the present, between individual memory and collective memory, aspects that enter then in the broader notion of "cultural memory"¹¹. Remembering was approached as the phenomenologically experienced act in pursuing memory.¹² So the history of *Këngë Korçare* presented here is also a way of "seeing" memory and remembering acts "at work", with all the advantages and disadvantages this implies.

III

The studies on urban music in Albania occupy a small section in a field that is dominated by "traditional" ethnomusicology studies focused on folk music

9. Relying on Buchanan 2006; Rice 1994; Frishkopf 2003.

10. Paraphrasing Buchanan 2006: 27

11. Paula Hamilton and Linda Shopes edited volume (Hamilton, Shopes: 2008) engages in bringing together oral history and memory studies. The authors underline that oral history has a very important role (though rather neglected) in how memory works as a social and cultural phenomenon. On 'cultural memory' see the edited volume *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies* (Erl, Nünning: 2010). Also: Erl 2011; Nora 1989.

12. For the phenomenology of remembering I have relied on Casey 2000; Connerton 1989; Riceour 2004.

and practices.¹³ Accordingly, it can be observed that music scholars have more frequently accessed the rural settings than the urban ones. When it comes to the latter – and here I would include also the tradition of studies evolved in neighboring countries – the formulations are motivated greatly by urban-rural dichotomies and how the latter have been transformed through the former.¹⁴ A shared topic in these analyses concerns the “Ottoman legacy” or the “Balkan-Ottoman”¹⁵ axis. The studies have been placed in the variously defined geography of Balkan, Southeastern Europe, and Mediterranean. Yet, the research contributions preserve national or ethnic-oriented traits.¹⁶ This orientation brought Jim Samson to recently pose an open question in his IMS conference paper as to how can we de-nationalise music history in the Balkans.¹⁷

My research considered these aspects and opted for a different angle. First, by following a line in which the ‘urban’ and the ‘rural’ are not “autonomous categories” but elements in constant exchange with each other.¹⁸ Urban ethnomusicology studies are of a greater help in tracing the ways in which different musical practices interact and are transformed within the urban settings.¹⁹ Secondly, it tries to come into more quotidian terms with the conception of Europe as “*idée fixe*”²⁰. This means looking at the ways in which the outcomes of this “idea” have been articulated and anchored in place generating vernacular expressive forms.

One of the most useful sources for my first approaches on urban music practices in Albanian cities was the work of Eno Koço. He has been focused on a corpus of songs performed by Albanian singers primarily in the 1920s and

13. Jane Sugarman provides a very comprehensive information on the scholarship (Sugarman 2000: 1003-1006). For recent studies see also Ahmedaja, Reinhard 2003; Ahmedaja: 2008; Pistrick 2012a; 2012b; Shetuni 2011; Ballgati In Press.

14. Notable illustration can be the entries in the Encyclopedias: Garland Encyclopedia of World Music. Vol. 8. Europe: 2000 and Oxford Music Online 2007-2013. See also Shupo 2006; Buchanan 2006; Rice 1994.

15. Brown 1996; Todorova 2009. For the contributions see more in particular the edited volumes *Urban Music in the Balkans* (Shupo 2006) and *Balkan Popular Culture and the Ottoman Ecumene* (Buchanan 2007a).

16. See also Elschek 1991: 91-111

17. Samson 2012

18. Tragaki 2007: 152

19. See inter alia Nettle 1978; Ridgeway, Roberts 1976; Tragaki 2007; Reyes Schramm 1982; Hemetek, Reyes 2007; Reyes 2012; Tsioulakis 2011.

20. Levin 1996: 49. Cited from Buchanan 2006: 138.

1930s.²¹ Koço denominated them as “Albanian urban lyric songs”. His research provided a sort of “integrative musical map” on dominant repertoires, musical styles and genres in Albanian cities, which was helpful for my musical analysis. Following his thought, I pursued a path through which the concept of urban could go beyond a prescriptive category of ‘këngë qytetare’ (urban songs) and “become activated”, so to say, within a concrete urban setting.

Thus, the elements that percolate my work are urban music, place, and the city. Korça’s songs (*Këngë Korçare*) required an urban setting for their development.²² Korçë was the geographical site that molded these conditions, which led me to consider the city as a site for exploring forms of music-making and the relations these forms had to other aspects of the city’s life.

IV

‘City’ has become a very broad transcultural term. ‘Population’ denotes a fluctuating measurement for defining an urban or rural center, as there is no universal agreement as to how many people should occupy a given place so that the latter can obtain the urban status.²³ I found more appropriate for the case the definition of Ulf Hannerz that “[t]he city [...] is the maximal adjustment to human interdependency”²⁴ and in addition to this, it is a multifarious site of interaction between people and place. What would reduce even more the chances of ambiguity and generalization, in my opinion, is a subtle but significant difference in the use of the definite article: thinking and writing of ‘a’ city or ‘cities’ appears to be more congruent than ‘the’ city, or ‘the’ cities.²⁵

The focus is on *Këngë Korçare*, yet the analysis takes into consideration also other forms of expressivity rooted either in ‘traditional’ models of music-making, or in more institutionalized forms, such as those created from the 1950s, during the socialist system. As has been noted, “urban life offers to the

21. Koço 2002; 2003; 2004.

22. Nettl 2003: 539

23. On this this discussion see Hannerz 1980: 67-72

24. Hannerz 1980: 80

25. Cowgill 2004: 526

[...] listener a variety of musical forms from which to choose"²⁶ and this, I suggest, serves to better trace why *Këngë Korçare* represented such a dominant and effective lived musical practice.²⁷

I must acknowledge at this point a calculated vagueness. Making such assumptions on music and urban geography in the twentieth century, one risks "smoothing out the past [of these cities] into a homogeneity [they] never possessed."²⁸ Therefore, I would like to specify that my reasoning is foregrounded on the observation that this city acquired a specific consciousness of itself during this time. As a consequence dominant elements in the city's culture became referential to national culture.²⁹

Combing the studies about cities in the Mediterranean area with more general contributions on this subject³⁰, I found useful to follow the theoretical line that explores a city in the "cultural context" brought up from John Agnew, John Mercer, and David Sopher.

To study the city in cultural context therefore requires us to use a concept of culture that is sensitive to the *causes* of both cultural continuity and change. It also requires us to insist on the importance of the collective experience of national, ethnic, and social groups.³¹

The term we prefer [cultural context] should suggest a nesting of contexts, from class and ethnic to national and global, by which specific cultures are defined and relate to one another. The term also strengthens the sense of culture as a contextual matrix of symbols and activities which give meaning and direction to people's lives.³²

The dynamics of continuity and change advantage human agency as a vector force. This means paying attention to the relation between this musical experience and the immediate worlds inhabited by those who practiced it. One

26. Ridgeway, Roberts 1976: 236

27. Paraphrasing Raymond Williams (1980: 38)

28. Van der Merwe 1989: 10.

29. Nettl 2003: 539-540

30. For the Mediterranean studies I have relied in: Yerolympos 1996; Leontidou 1990; Collouğlu, Toksöz 2010; Freitag, Fuhrman, Lafi, Riedler 2011a; Kenny, Kertzner 1983a. For a broader 'geography' of city studies see Hannerz 1980; Low 1999; Lefebvre 1996; Agnew, Mercer, Sopher 1984; Williams 1973; Sennett 1969; Lynch 1990[1960].

31. Agnew, Mercer, Sopher 1984: 2

32. Agnew, Mercer, Sopher 1984: 7

should consider their roles as citizens, dwellers, producers, consumers and at the same time, as members of particular professions and particular associations.

Yet, “the city is not merely a research milieu or a population concentration - it is also a place.”³³ This notion has recently acquired a particular attention as analytical construct³⁴ and I find appropriate applying it to my analysis as well.

[Place] is an already plenary presence permeated with culturally constituted institutions and practices. As the basis of collective as well as individual habitus, these institutions and practices pervade the bodies of sensing subjects in a given place as well as the gathering power of the place itself. [...] As places gather bodies in their midst in deeply enculturated ways, so cultures conjoin bodies in concrete circumstances of emplacement.³⁵

Edward C. Casey puts a special emphasis on the phenomenology of being *in place* as a form of knowledge and experiencing.³⁶ This is the reason why I find his approach more productive than the structuralism of *locale*³⁷ in discussing place and places of music-making and the level of interconnections they may produce.

‘Place’ can refer first of all to concrete settings “where musicians make and think about music”³⁸ – domestic, public bar venues, concert or festival stages. These settings can be successively connected with music experiences located elsewhere, as Richard Wolf noted. ‘Place’ can refer to the city itself as a site for investigating forms of communal organization and the constant interfaces between urban, rural, regional, national, and cosmopolitan conditions. Finally, ‘place’ can better systematize the ideas on local knowledge, the experiencing of music within “local musical universe”³⁹, and its possible interconnection networks. The ‘flexibility’ of this term is due, in my opinion, to the fact that

33. Agnew, Mercer, Sopher 1984: 4

34. See more notably Feld, Basso 1996; Setha M. Low (1996a; 1996b) and the volumes edited by her: *Theorizing the city* (Low 1999) and *The Anthropology of space and space. Locating Culture* (ed. Low, Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003a).

35. Casey 1996: 46

36. Casey 1996: 15-52. See also Casey 2009

37. Giddens 1986: 118–122. See also Wolf 2009: 20

38. Wolf 2009: 8. A stimulating study that made me turn the attention towards this perspective was also *The Sounds of Paris in Verdi's La Traviata*. (Sala 2008)

39. Wolf 2009: 8

music is in place and as Martin Stokes pointed out, it is socially meaningful not entirely but largely because it provides means by which people recognize identities and places, and the boundaries, which separate them.⁴⁰

V

Këngë Korçare represented an active music experience *in place*. As such they were inherent to quotidian realms and to the notion of “everyday life”⁴¹. The way I have applied this notion here relies on an essay by Harris Berger and Giovanna Del Negro. They suggest a direction that concerns areas of study, which border so to say the ‘traditional’ with the ‘popular’ contexts. From this point of view

[t]here is no phenomenon, domain, or process in the social world that can be considered essentially ‘everyday’. To the contrary, everyday life is best understood as an interpretive framework defined in dialectic opposition to the notion of special events and used by both scholars and non-scholars alike to make sense of practice.⁴²

At the same time, they specify that “the reading of any social practice as everyday or special depends on a complex interplay of factors and interpreter’s own meaning-making process.”⁴³

Through this conceptualized dyad, I do not want to offer a simplistic dichotomization of the everyday/special event types in Korçë’s society, but through it investigate the expressive dimensions that this practice gained in the various settings where the song was performed. *Këngë Korçare* have been part of both special and everyday events in people’s life and have surfaced either as spontaneous self-expression or as a deliberated form of creativity. This oriented my analysis towards what Berger and Del Negro called a “populist perspective on expressive culture”, embedded in “practice orientations”. In this analysis, the ethnographic methods “are but one component in a larger

40. Stokes 1994: 5

41. De Certeau 1984; Lefebvre 1991; 2002

42. Berger, Del Negro 2004: 4

43. Berger, Del Negro 2004: 14

orientation that seeks to understand a given social world by taking seriously the diverse perspectives of the actors within it.”⁴⁴

This oriented my research towards the various settings in which this song was produced, received, and experienced - being they either from professional musicians or from those that did not play or sing to earn a living. The performance of these songs included various settings: from a gathering with friends, to a concert; from a spontaneous street song or serenading, to a radio recording experience. Thomas Turino’s functional fields of music making - the real-time performance of *participatory* and *presentational* music making and the making recordings of *high fidelity music* and *studio audio art*⁴⁵ - were efficient analytical ‘tools’. These ‘tools’ help understanding the “integrative function”⁴⁶ of this music that is, the force that integrates and unites on the one hand the urban society and on the other the individuals with their social world.

VI

The typology of song investigated here shares many elements in common with popular music genres that evolved in the Mediterranean region during the twentieth century.⁴⁷ The role of recordings and cinema in the practice motivated me to combine urban ethnomusicology methods with popular music studies. ‘Popular music’ seems to be a “transcultural phenomenon”⁴⁸ of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, applying it to the Albanian case, posed some issues for clarification.

The use of the term *popular music* as a translation of *muzikë popullore* has a problematic connotation in Albanian music. This involves either the scholarly field, or more pragmatic usages. Before the 1990s, the repertoire that qualified the western-oriented conceptions of the *popular* could be associated with light music (*muzikë e lehtë*). During the communist regime *muzikë popullore* de-

44. Berger, Del Negro 2004: 19-20

45. Turino 2008: 21. *His Italics*.

46. Bateson 1972. Cited from Turino 2008: 3

47. Just to cite a few: Kantadha, Rebetiko, Neapolitan song, French chansons, Trieste’s songs (Canti Triestini).

48. Baily 1981: 105-122

defined a specific category. It was associated to forms of traditional music conceived as presentational performance. On a verbal level, the *popullore* moved from a neutral term to the articulation of an ideological constructed category that implied a web of signifieds: folk music, ethnic music, nationalist music, and music of the people (*muzikë e popullit*). This citation from an Albanian Encyclopedia can better illustrate my argument:

Folklore: The oral, musical and choreographic artistic works of the working masses, an opus that resembles those aspects from reality that appeal to them, conformed to ideo-aesthetic requirements and to the possibilities of practicing and assimilating them. The term Folklore in some places is employed in a wider range as *popular culture* for identifying popular traditions, mores, artistic works, etc. Folklore is distinguished for the *collective* character. [...] It is the result of the energy and the experience of a group of people that made a single creative subject; the group that grew up and was taught in certain environments; and that acted as representatives of the masses. Our Folklore is distinguished for its *popular* and national character.⁴⁹

The notion *muzikë popullore* mingled with 'folklore' conception as "the sum of musical works that live and are inherited as part of folklore."⁵⁰ Proceeding in this line, the city's music (*muzikë popullore qytetare*) was defined as "part of *popullore* music that nests in city environments."⁵¹

The *popullore* functioned as a prescriptive category in Albanian music. It was conceived as such either from the scholars that theorized on it, or from the individuals that produced and listened to it. Yet, what seems evident to me is that either the *popullore* music or the *light* music implied the "contradic-

49. "Folklori: Krijimtaria artistike gojore, muzikore dhe koreografike kolektive e masave punonjëse, krijimtari e cila pasyron anët e realitetit që u interesojnë masave me forma artistike në përshtatje me kërkesat ideoestetike e mundësitë e praktikimit dhe të asimilimit krijues prej tyre. Termi F[olklor] në disa vende përdoret me kuptimin e gjerë për tërësinë e traditave, zakoneve, krijimeve artistike etj. popullore, si sinonim i termit kulturë popullore. [Folklori] dallohet për karakterin e tij kolektiv [...] Ai është fryt i energjisë dhe përvojës së një shumice njerëzish, që përbëjnë të njëjtin subjekt krijues; rriten dhe edukohen në mjedis të caktuara, veprojnë si përfaqësues të masave. F[olklori] ynë dallohet për karakterin e tij popullor dhe kombëtar." (Panajoti 1985: 278-279). When not otherwise stated, the translations of citations are all mine.

A separate field of studies operating as Folkloristika (Haxhihasani 1985: 279-280) covered the studies on folklore, affiliated with Instituti i Folklorit (Folklore Institute). In 1980 a scientific publication *Kultura Popullore* (Popular/Folk Culture) was issued.

50. "[t]ërësia e krijimeve muzikore që jetojnë e trashëgohen si pjesë e folklorit." In Shituni 1985a: 736

51. "[p]jesë e muzikës popullore që bën jetë kryesisht në mjediset qytetare. Ka lindur nën ndikimin e muzikës popullore fshatare." In Shituni 1985b: 736-737.

tory nature of popular music expression”, which does not dismiss “either an undiluted *vox populi*, or a superimposed, monolithic, dominant ideology.”⁵²

I acknowledge the set of issues bared by the notion of ‘popular’ as foregrounded by the Anglo-American scholarly tradition and the consequences that may arise from its employment in ‘other’ geographies or local worlds.⁵³ The point here is to chose an approach that can better serve the analysis of a situated activity such as song making in Korçë without being entrapped in given categories. It is an approach that considers the dialectical relationships between this repertoire and Albanian music scene and also the connections with other urban music experiences in the Mediterranean. Furthermore, different scholars⁵⁴ researching in this geographical area have delineated emergent urban popular expressions. Without necessarily extending the Anglo-American notion of ‘popular music’, Donna Buchanan has pointed out the existence of well-established circuits of popularization and interchange prior to those of contemporary global media⁵⁵ in the intercourse between Western-style music, Ottoman-style music, and local idioms.

These cases made me more interested in the “valorization of locality and place, especially”⁵⁶ in popular music studies. Drawing on Thomas Turino’s book⁵⁷, the question I posed myself was why *Këngë Korçare* mattered? Of course, the answers are to be found in the narratives of this dissertation. What is important to underline is that this music was integral to an “articulative

52. Manuel 1988: 14

53. I am very thankful to Maurizio Corbella for the stimulating conversations on this topic. The studies that approach popular culture and popular music in Southeastern Europe are contained in the latest twenty years or so, in relation to the emerging commercial realities and the direct influence from western popular music (See Buchanan 2007a; Baker 2010; Plastino 2003).

54. See inter alia, Manuel 1988: 115-140; Danielson 1997; Tragaki 2007; Holst 1994; Fabbri In Press; Elliott 2010. The volumes on the Mediterranean: Plastino 2003; Cooper, Dawe: 2005; Bohlman, Sorce Keller, with Azzaroni 2009.

55. Buchanan 2007b: 4. A description on the development of popular urban-based musical cultures beginning in the twentieth century can be found in Buchanan 2006: 107-117, in relation to Bulgaria. For a different perspective see Fabbri (In Press). By drawing a figurative triangle between Smirna, Athens and Naples, Fabbri underlines not only the importance of live music venues, but also the role of phonographic recordings in the dynamic interaction between the three shores in the development of popular music. On this topic see also Pennanen 1997; 1999; Manuel 1988; Sorce Keller 2000; 1993. Here can be included also the movie *Whose is this song* by Adela Peeva.

56. Krims 2007: xxxviii.

57. Turino 2008: 1

process”⁵⁸ through which a musical form and practice had been appropriated from particular groups. It performed social functions that so to say ‘traditional’ musical formats could no longer fulfill.⁵⁹ Lastly, it was related to the “micropolitics of emplaced, embodied, and voiced identity”⁶⁰ in a particular local life-world.

VII

This dissertation is structured in five parts. The first part is a history of people and place. It is divided in three chapters. My aim was to frame historical events and people’s agencies as processes of place-making and people-making within the condition of urbanity. In the first two chapters, these aspects emerge as historical narratives. In the third, they are brought into discussion through considerations on cultural memory and remembering.

The second part of the dissertation is a historical reconstruction of song practice: as sound-event, as lived experience, and as a musical product. Chapter Four and Chapter Six focus mainly on *Këngë Korçare*. Chapter Five presents a comparative view with the dominant forms of music making in the city’s setting.

The third part is an analysis of the repertoire, focusing on songs-types (Chapter Seven), appropriation techniques (Chapter Eight), and considerations on recordings (Chapter Nine). Part four focuses on two case studies: *Lira* group as a historic “voice” of the repertoire and the female singer Spanja Pipa, a revue artist of the 1960s.

In the fifth part I will discuss emotion and communication in the love songs and the ‘humoristic songs’ (*këngë humoristike*). Chapter Fourteen concludes the narratives by highlighting specific aspects related to self-expression, resistance, and nostalgia.

58. Middleton 1990: 7-33

59. Manuel 1988: vi

60. Feld, Fox, Porcello, and Samuels 2004: 340

Korça: A History

Mikaela Minga

Chapter 1

Korça: Place-Making and Grassroots Urbanism

*Historical Chronicles*¹

During the nineteenth century, urban life signaled transformations in the western part of the Ottoman Empire. “Internal dynamics and external influences”² brought on the one hand a new configuration of geo-political and cultural powers in the region, and on the other highlighted internal processes of urbanization, economical growth and socio-cultural changes.³ The emergence of nationalism as a preeminent force accentuated these dynamics to a high degree whilst the low efficiency of reforms demonstrated weakness within Ottoman institutions and heterogeneous developments. The most impressive fact, according to Nathalie Clayer, was that everything was taking place rather quickly shaping worldviews (Weltanschauung) that marked not only life experiences of these peoples, but also that of the generations to come⁴.

1. I am thankful to Nathalie Clayer for reading an earlier draft of this chapter.

2. Kostopoulou 2011: 15. See also Heper 1980: 81-105; Jelavich 1983a: 274- 287; Findley 1980: 151-336.

3. Yerolympos 1996; Leontidou 1990; Freitag, Fuhrman, Lafi, Riedler 2011a; Jezernik 2004: 206-234; Shkodra 1984.

4. Clayer 2012: 38.

Korçë emerged as a prominent “commercetown”⁵ type during the mid nineteenth century. This was an outcome of intercontinental commercial revitalization and agency of native orthodox merchants.⁶ Korça became a place where trade routes simultaneously ended and started. The market place counted around 900 shops, manufactures and stores by the beginning of the twentieth century. Merchants initially traded to the south and southwest (Berat, Corfu, Janina) and, taking advantage of the economic decline of the Janina, extended their commercial contacts to the east in Monastir, Thessaloniki, and Istanbul.⁷ New networks were also established between the city and the internal sanjaks’ areas, including towns and villages not to be comprised within the future Albanian borders.⁸

In the last decades of the nineteenth century the population was estimated at around 15,000 people. However, this statistic should be taken with caution as the influx of new settlers into the city was continuous and so the population changed frequently.⁹ Korça’s close bonds with Thessaloniki and Monastir improved intensely in 1894 with the construction of a connecting railway line Monastir-Thessaloniki.¹⁰ Although lacking direct access to maritime commerce, Monastir and, of a middle importance, Korçë can be described as hin-

5. Redfield, Singer 1954: 55-56. For a historical overview see Hannerz 1980: 59-118.

6. Stoianovich 1960. A prominent role in the merchantile revitalization has been attributed to the destruction of Moschopolis (Voskopoja) in 1778. (See Shkodra 1984: 380; Thomo 1988: 14; Xhufi 2010). Moschopolis (southeast of Korça’s district) was a culturally and economically center of mostly Aromanian speaking people during the 17th and 18th century (Stoianovich 1960: 252). After a series of wrecking that started in 1778 most of the population fled and settled in European countries or in neighboring towns. (For further information see Fassel, Förster, 1999: 33-35; Plasari 2000; Fallo 2010). This seems to have prompted a different configuration of the commercial routes in the region. Marc Cohen relied on the same assumption for the emergence of Monastir as an important commercial center (Cohen 2003: 12-14).

7. For the market place see Shkodra 1984: 200; Mitko 1981 [1884]: 570. For trade activities see Thomo 1988: 19; Clayer 2012: 111.

8. Until the early twentieth century, the future Albania’s towns and cities were divided into different administrative units of the Ottoman Empire. They did not presume any specific interaction among them from a nationalist perspective. Two main gravitational centers of political and economical power existed in the western Balkans: Shkodra and Janina, while smaller cities functioned as arteries of imperial intercourse (Jelavich 1983a: 84). The administrative configuration of vilayets (the main administrative division, followed by the smaller divisions of sanjak, and kaza) changed more than once during Tanzimat reforms. From 1865 the most stable ones turned out to be Shkodër, Ioannina (Janina), Monastir (Bitola) and Kosova. The commercial factor during the late period of the Ottoman Empire shaped life in these urban centers. Trade held a central position in city life and the cities that had a certain importance were either ports or rested along main mercantile routes (Stoianovich 1960; Jelavich 1983a: 62).

9. Thomo 1988: 17 -19; 79-81

10. For Monastir see Cohen 2003: 2-5; Clayer 2012: 110-111. For Thessaloniki: Yerolympos 1996; 2007; Mazower 2004: 185-272. For Korçë: Shkodra 1984: 385; N.D.N 1923: 9.

terland cities of the Mediterranean that shared many things in common with the cosmopolitan and multi-ethnic coastal metropolises.¹¹

Another significant aspect in the emergence of Korça as an important urban center of the region should be attributed to mass migrations. The latter, as Joel Martin Halpern noted, marked a departure in Balkan history during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries¹². The *sanjak* of Korça was estimated as the second large area of migration fluxes.¹³ Within the Ottoman Empire's borders, mobility was easy and did not need specific requirements, which led to the creation of concentrated settlements (*koloni*) in countries such as Romania, Bulgaria, Egypt, and from the first years of the twentieth century, North America. Migration involved mostly males as principal actors.

The concept of "chain migration"¹⁴ as designating processes that form ethnic neighborhoods in urban areas based on kinship base, family ties, or shared place of origin, can be applied as well to the process through which migrants attracted and recruited each other. Pertinent to this discussion is the fact that mass migration was principally oriented towards urban geographies. Migrants from Korça settled mostly in cities. The latter were experiencing processes of urbanization and industrialization, which therefore required manpower. Well-known centers for this were Bucharest¹⁵, Constance, Braila, Faiyum, Sofia, and Worcester, Boston and Philadelphia in North America. Considering as well the relevant changes these societies experienced from the advent of nationalism, there are three intertwining potentialities of Korçarë Diaspora that I would like to draw attention to. First, the compactness of settlements and agency in creating the most important Albanian Diasporas of that period. Second, the preservation of networks within and between cities.

11. See Collouğlu, Toksöz 2010: 2-8; Leontidou 1990:7-46. Remarkable for this status was Monastir, "[this] ideal Turkish city of the westernizing Ottoman Empire" (Cohen 2003: 2) that due to its geographical isolation was regarded as an "oasis of civilization" (Cohen 2003: 1).

12. Halpern 2004: 18.

13. See Tirta 1999: 146-158.

14. Hannerz 1980: 267.

15. The community of Bucharest (Kolonia e Bukureshtit) and that of Romania were older. Albanian speaking families were settled from the 17th century. See Tirta 1999: 130; Clayer 2012: 123-125; 169; 374.

Thirdly, political and cultural involvement in propagating Albanian nationalism molding what came to be known as *Rilindja Kombëtare (National Rebirth)*.¹⁶

The links between Korçarë of Diaspora and their national oriented activism in the city were significant.¹⁷ Alongside the nation-building phenomenon, I would like to turn the attention to subtler processes of communal organizations and place-making. Imagining and awareness of a national community¹⁸ has largely shadowed the idea of home, emplacement, and “belonging” to social groups or communities. Driving on the assumption that community and locality are not given or natural but invented from both embodied practice and ‘ideas’¹⁹, what I am suggesting here is that migration shaped differently people conceptions about place. Mobility engendered a growing self-perception on ‘place’ and “communal belonging”²⁰ that evolved alongside the “language-based”²¹ one.

What should be noted is that the situation of Korçë between 1908-1920 was characterized by many border disputes and ongoing ethnic oriented conflicts regarding the regions of Macedonia, and North Epirus. This brought a series of clashes especially with Greece²² that left their imprint in the future history of this regions. During World War One, French presence resulted in the proclamation of an Independent Region (Republika Autonome e Korçës) under

16. The literature on *Rilindja Kombëtare (National Rebirth)* is vast. For the arguments discussed here I have relied on Clayer 2012; Altimari 2004: 79-94; 1984; Sugarman 1999; Elsie 2005.

17. Clayer 2012: 169; 374.

18. Bhaba 1990b: 291-292.

19. See Gupta, Ferguson 1997b: 6

20. Hobsbawm 1990: 107-109. This can be illustrated for example by the use of the name Korça as an identification mark. In an article on the Albanian Diaspora of Bucharest, the author cited of its members as follows: Eftim Mitko-Korça, Nikolla Naço-Korça, Jovan Mitko-Korça, Kristo Dako-Korça (Poradeci 2010: 180). These people were Diaspora activists of the National Rebirth. In the same line of argument can be included also a number of geographic and historical guides about the city and its hinterlands published between the mid nineteenth century and the early 1920s (Mitko 1981[1859]; Mitko 1981[1867]; N.D.N 1901; N.D.N 1923. (For further authors see Thomo 1988: 17-21).

21. Anderson 2006. The concentration of the national activism in Korçë raised also a number of critiques. Faik Konica (1875-1942), one of the most charismatic and contradictory Albanian intellectuals in the first half of the twentieth century, noted that the major interests of Albanian Diasporas in Bucharest and Istanbul were concentrated on the “national future of Korçë” rather than on that of the whole nation (Konica 2001[1899]: 35).

22. See Kondis 1976; Clayer 2012; Jelavich 1983b: 79-105.

their Suzerainty (1916-1918). Finally Albanian nationalist activism from the American diaspora made the city its own “operative” center.²³

Korçë joined the Albanian government in 1920, almost eight years after Albanian Independence. In that moment, the Albanian state counted very few urban centers, among which Korça and Shkodra were the most important ones. Tirana, the established capital was a very small center. In that period counted less than 12, 000 inhabitants²⁴ and had to wait until the late 1920s for undergoing urban projects, mainly from Italian investments. Within the national boundaries, the city faced new problems. Local connections existed, but to reach the Adriatic and the Albanian ports of Durrës or Vlora was more difficult than those of Thessaloniki and Corfu. Connectivity between Albanian cities was scarce. “North and South were almost detached to each other and the same happened with Southeast Albania.”²⁵ An air transport that could connect faster Korça with Tirana and Vlora was the solution for individual journeys, though few people could afford it.²⁶ Hence, the statistic of 1923 that described Korça as the largest Albanian city with 25,598 inhabitants²⁷ can be considered more a consequence of previous years and less an outcome from joining Albanian central government. In the interwar period, Korça seems to be one of the few Albanian cities where capitalist investments prospered.²⁸ Yet they could not ensure economical stability and people continued to rely heavily on migration.

23. Republika Autonome e Korçës (Autonomous Republic of Korça) was created in 1916 during the WWI. It was governed by a local council under French suzerain for calming down the continuous disputes and conflicts between Greek and Korça’s representatives. For city’s administration during this period see Duka 1997: 62-71; For historical information see Prifti, Shpuza 2007: 88-91. On the activism of American Diaspora see Jacques 1995: 305-372; Federal Writers’ Project of the Works Progress Administration of Massachusetts 1939

24. Duka 1997: 114

25. Prifti, Shpuza 2007: 106.

26. See Pollo, Bihiku, Frashëri, Çami 1984: 61.

27. Selenica 1923: 15.

28. Prifti, Shpuza 2007: 102; See also Duka 1997

The Region and “its” Dwellers

In the sanjak of Korçë more than one half of the population was Orthodox Christian.²⁹ The majority spoke Albanian, though Aromanian speakers were a significant component. Roma communities lived in the city as well. Finally, a minority of Slav speakers lived in two villages nearby: Drenova and Boboshtica. In the city there was neither ethnic nor religious homogeneity. The Orthodox Christians were greater in number compared to Muslims. Identification of inhabitants was not based upon nationality or ethnic bases, but on religion.

Until the mid nineteenth century the Ottomans regarded Orthodox Christianity as ‘Roman’, i.e. the same as the Graeco-Byzantine faith. Whoever was not a Turk was a *Rumi* or ‘Greek’, a designation, which was applied to Albanians, Bulgarians, Macedonians, Serbs, Vlachs, and Greeks.³⁰

Religious partition of the city resembled the same model as that found in many Ottoman centers from that area: groups lived in distinct spaces and had separated lives, aligned with their religious communities. Korça was divided in three parts: the market place and two residential areas (Mëhalla) called *Kasaba* and *Varosh*. The Morava river configured a divisive geographical line between *Kasaba* - the area where Muslims lived – and *Varosh*, the area where orthodox Christians lived. Each of them had as center the religious building: Mosque of Mirahori (1496) for the Muslim part and the church complex of Mitropolia” (1707) for the Christian Orthodox one. The market place (*pazari*) was situated in between the living quarters and was the most active space in terms of a centripetal mobility force towards the city from internal rural areas, and for external routes.

The spirit of national consciousness drastically changed people’s self-designation on ethnicity and religion. The impact of nationalism in Korçë

29. Sanjak was the second-order administrative subdivision of the Ottoman Empire. The first-order administrative unit was the Vilayet. The demographic summary provided here is based on Clayer 2012: 109; N.D.N. 1923: 5-8, 92-97; Mitko 1981: 538; Thomo 1988: 20; Duka 1997: 15-16. According to T. Selenica (Selenica 1928: 521) Korça in 1927 had population of 14919 Orthodox Christians and 4572 Muslims. (I am thankful to Nathalie Clayer for the latter source.)

30. Jezernik 2004: 180

brought a growing awareness of the “imagined community”³¹ and triggered a particular mechanism of interaction between religious groups.³² Agencies of élites from both religious groups have been, in my opinion, fundamental for shaping equilibrium of forces between the Orthodox Christians’ demographic dominance and the urban Muslim population. Educated actors operative in national activism and agency of élite fractions represented a sort of paradigm. Yet, as a few insights from memoirs and everyday press suggest³³, religious based community life did not evaporate as soon as Albanianess approached. Separation of two religious *Mëhallas* did not change until the end of World War Two and people remained close to religious communities. The forms of interaction evolved cautiously from what could be described as symbolic and indirect experiences to more intimate and direct ones.³⁴

The largest group of Roma people³⁵ was that of Gyptians (Evgjitë). They were settled in the quartier of *Kulla e Hirit*, in Kasaba. They lived in small one-story houses, doing mostly humble jobs and were described as Muslims. Another group was established in the new quarter of Katavaroshi during the nineteenth century. They were described as Orthodox Christians and worked as blacksmiths, shoemakers, or servants. Apart from Roma nomads, who spoke their own language, Gyptians spoke Albanian. Both had to adapt them-

31. Anderson 2006

32. Compared to other Albanian speaking regions, this was something that Korçarë seemed to anticipate. An evidence for this was the administrative council of the semi-independent government established in 1916 the religious ‘balance’ of its membership (Zoi 2001: 270-271). Everyday press production can provide a further illustration. Editors of three of the most important newspapers published between 1908-1912 (Korça, Lidhja Ortodokse [Orthodox League] and Koha [Time]) were Sami Pojani (?-1910), journalist, activist editor and Mihal Grameno, (1871-1931) writer, journalist, fighter (komit). The former was a Bektashi; the latter was an Orthodox-Christian.

33. This information has been provided by a research on local printing press in the first half of the twentieth century. The sources have been: *Gazeta e Korçës*, 1920-1939; *Koha*, 1920-1924; *Zëri i Korçës*, 1925-1930; *Shqiptari i Amerikës*, 1922-1924. And the journals: *Bota*, 1924; *Bota e Re*, 1936-1937.

34. Paraphrasing Tuan 1977: 6. This dynamic had different traits in each urban center. In Shkodër for example, the most important religious groups were the Christian Catholics on the one hand and the Muslim, on the other. Due also to the historic role of the city as a center of the Ottoman Empire and as center of the Catholic Albanian speaking community, the dynamics of the events and realities were different. See for that Shkodra 1984; Clayer 2012; Duka 1997). The most relevant changes in urban centers occurred in the interwar period. During Ahmet Zog’s rule (1925-1939) the latter involved also state policies, such as the law that abolished the veil or yashmak concealing of women faces and bodies, very prominent in the case of Shkodër, for example.

35. In Albania, Roma people distinguish themselves between *Kurbetër* (Romani) and *Evgjitër* (Gyptians). The latter claim to originate from Egypt. The information provided here is based on: De Soto, Beddies, Gedeshi 2005; Hasluck 1938.

selves to the Albanian speaking hegemonic ethnic groups. Their social integration however proceeded very slowly.

Economic growth and demographic expansion during the late nineteenth century signaled the passage from an old social order to a set of experiences that would precede the new one.³⁶ Local power once applied to public officials of the Empire, such as military men and landlords (*bejlerët*), or to the religious officials of Greek-Orthodox church and Mirahori's *vakif*³⁷ begun to shift towards new social classes and groups. This change brought a revitalization of the Orthodox community. The latter became an active agent in molding the urban reality. *Varoshi*, the area where Christians lived faced the most evident urban transformations and the rise of merchants' bourgeoisie represented one of the most important outcomes.³⁸ Predominantly a wholesaler (*tregëtar grosist*), this type of merchant had travelled a lot and fluently spoke several languages. He managed to place himself in the highest hierarchy of urban classes and to turn his entrepreneurship into a family business. Considering the commercial character of the city, merchants gained a distinguished status among city dwellers. Korçarë used to call them *aristokratë* (*aristocrats*), estimations derived from their socio-economic position and from the ways in which they presented themselves in the local society. In the interwar period, this merchant bourgeoisie had lodged in the city. Despite up and downs of economy, it preserved prosperity and an elevated life-style compared to lower classes.

Traian Stoianovich ascribes to the Balkan Christian merchant a catalyst attribute in joining Balkan peoples to Europe, both through commerce and ideas.³⁹ This perspective, although significant, should not be taken as exclusive. Here is also valuable Homi Bhaba's distinction between two vector forces: the

36. Freitag [et al.] 2011a.

37. *Vakif* (al. *Vakëf*) was a property dedicated to charitable purposes and excluded from taxes. Iliaz Mirahori, the Ottoman official that awarded the land, transformed it in *vakif*. His successors managed it and benefited the incomes until late 1910s.

38. The Orthodox Christian merchant was dominant but there were also Muslim Merchants. Valuable information can be found in daily press advertisements. See also Prodani 2011; Face 2010: 36-42.

39. Stoianovich 1960: 235.

west expansion in the east and east migratory penetration in the west.⁴⁰ His point pertains to the agencies of a growing lower middle class. The latter, as I am going to describe below, proved to be very vital in the under-construction urban reality of Korça.

The merchant bourgeoisie made a high middle class. Alongside emerged also a lower one constituted of people with migratory backgrounds: small-scale merchants, craftsmen, landholders, teachers, and clerks.⁴¹ The way they managed migration incomes - brought home as cash capital and invested in real estate, land for cultivation, or small capitalist enterprises⁴² - influenced their economic stability. Nathalie Clayer asserts that this capital improved socio-economic status of people and families, legitimating a social group that did not have to rely on waged work as officials of local administration.⁴³

Among these middle classes came into prominence a growing sensibility towards the relations between culture, civilization, progress, and their assumed status as universal values.⁴⁴ The latter could afford higher education or university studies abroad. Therefore, acquisition of knowledge gained a special value. At this point, there are three relevant aspects that should be discussed. The first one is related to ramifications of education institutions present in the city. Among these, the most important turned out to be the French Lyceum (Liceu Francez).⁴⁵

The French Lyceum satisfied a first stage for the demands on higher education. Presence of this institution amplified on the one hand the impact of the city among Albanian élites and the perception of it as a higher education cen-

40. Bhaba 1990b: 291

41. According to Mark Tirta (Tirta 1999: 155) Korçarë were mostly distinguished in doing business. Usually, they run private enterprises, while a few succeeded in achieving wealth and became prosperous merchants. See also Gogaj 2003b: 15-63. Clayer 2012: 124-133.

42. Valentina Duka. Personal Interview. 12 September 2010. For the migration cash capital see Tirta 1999: 165.

43. Clayer 2012: 355-356.

44. See on this argument Todorova 1997: 129.

45. The French Lyceum (1917-1939) was a secondary school established during the period of French Suzerainty. It had a French staff extended later with Albanian professors. Students of this school had the opportunity to follow higher education in France or in other European Universities. Most of them became future prominent representatives of Albanian élites contributing further to its notoriety. From 1925 the French Lyceum became a national public school and the Albanian government paid the French professors.⁴⁵ This was in line with a politic that saw higher education and schooling from western European models as a priority of the then emergent national élites.

ter.⁴⁶ On the other, it reinforced on a local level the ascendancy of French culture, which was highly valued since the late Ottoman period in the region.⁴⁷ The imprint of the “Frankish style”⁴⁸ can be illustrated in the city’s designation as “Paris i vogël” (Little Paris).

The French Lyceum gained with time a prestigious part. Yet, the city made a fascinating center in matters of educational and cultural institutions. In Korça

could be found schools and institutions *lato sensu* cultural, Albanian, French, Greek, American, Romanian, Italian with persistence of Bulgarian and Turkish influences as well; this in a city that in the 1930s counted only 25 000 people. And in spite of the linguistic and cultural babel, or maybe because of that, Korçë, situated more ovest in Albania, was also the most western one, the most disciplined, tidy and industrious. But this multicultural society was not the one to impress the imaginary of travellers or journalists searching for the real face of Albania.⁴⁹

The situation therefore was everything else than uniform and this leads the discussion towards the second aspect: language.

The *sanjaks* of Manastir and Korçë were areas of contact among Albanian speaking people and other linguistic groups. According to Nathalie Clayer this was not a phenomenon common to other Albanian regions.⁵⁰ Use of different languages was common in everyday life, especially among men who usually understood and spoke many languages. There were families in which different languages were in use, as a Korçar recalls, when his father and uncle used to speak Greek and Albanian, while his mother spoke Aromanian.⁵¹

46. Bino 1999: 96-100

47. Nathalie Clayer. Email conversation. 12 July 2013. See also Mazower 2004: 222-252

48. Mazower 2004: 222

49. “A Korçë, esistevano scuole e istituzioni lato sensu culturali albanesi, francesi, greche, americane, rumene, italiane, permanevano influenze turche e bulgare, pur contando, la città negli anni Trenta, soltanto 25.000 abitanti; e malgrado la babele linguistica e culturale, o forse proprio per questo, Korçë, la città più ad oriente dell’Albania, ne era la più occidentale, oltre che la più industriosa e la più ordinata. Ma non era questa società multiculturale a impressionare la fantasia di visitatori e giornalisti alla ricerca del vero volto dell’Albania.” (Della Rocca 1990: 17).

50. Clayer: 2012: 110

51. Pirro Bimbli. Personal Conversation, September 2012. Significant, I believe, is the case of Aromanian speaking groups and their gradual homogenizing. (Pandi Bello. Personal Conversation, August 2011. See also Schwander-Sievers 1999).

I acknowledge the risk in introducing for discussion issues of national and ethnic belonging in this area. Yet, what I am suggesting here is that among the main reasons that Korça gained such an important role were the multilingual condition and the interregional intercourse. Despite polemics, contestation, or considerations of it as “cradle of Albanianess”, this city was most of all a place of encounter between experiences related to Albanianism, as well as to Hellenism, and “Roman-Aromanism”⁵². The cultural reality molded in the first half of the twentieth century was a consequence of their confluence, and of the attempts to gain hegemony. This concentrated in one place the meeting of different ventures and lines of thought, sometimes approving and supporting each other’s goals and other times disputing and opposing their actions.

Social life

Social life, which is the third aspect taken into consideration here, experienced a number of important changes in the first half of the twentieth century. The dynamics described here involved mostly a young generation whose energies and interests were spent in appropriating and promoting popular European memes: parties, concerts, and sports. In considering these dynamics as Europeanization one may run however the risk of generalizing. Rather “than being a reality, [Europeanization] was often only a label giving legitimacy to very different kinds of agencies.”⁵³ This is the reason why one should take into consideration the relations to the local life-world.

52. Aromanian-Romanianism is a term indicating the ethnic-movements related to Aromanian speaking groups in Southeastern Europe and their interconnection with Romania. Korçë was one of the most important centers of this movement. A large group of Aromanian speaking people lived in the city. Bucharest on the other hand was to Korçarë an important station of the Diaspora. In the late nineteenth century, this city became also center of Albanian national activists. There were close bounds between the activists engaged in both movements. On Aromanian-Romanianism I have relied on Nathalie Clayer (2012: 260-276) that grounded her arguments in Peyfuss 1974. See also Schwander-Sievers 1999.

53. Grandits, Clayer, Pichler 2011b: 3.

The insights can be better introduced by discussing here the so-called *Ballo* (*Ballo* event)⁵⁴ and its popularization among Korçarë youths. *Ballo* was a “special event” arranged for a celebrative occasion. It became fashionable beginning with the 1920s. People gathered for partying and usually dancing. Their organization was associated with private societies or students’ circles. *Ballo* events were held in public spaces such as *Shtëpia e Oficerave* or the Cinema’s Hall. In some cases people had to buy tickets to participate. Very renowned in printing press was ‘Voskopoja *Ballo* event’ (*Balloja Voskopojare*) held annually under the auspices of a society called *Rilindja*. Patron of this *Ballo* event was Dhimitër Fundo, a charismatic figure in the city, now remembered as promoter of social meetings, picnics, arts and sport initiatives.⁵⁵

The advertisements of *Ballo* events put a special emphasis on European dances. Very fashionable came to be the *Quadrille*, a form of contradance music with couples, guided by a male leader. Spread of these popular memes shares elements in common with similar events taking place in neighboring urban centers. More close for the case seemed to me the parallel with the “starogradska stil” of music and dance spread among the growing urban middle classes in Ohrid, Monastir, and Struga.⁵⁶

By drawing these parallels, I would like to point out that the events taking place in here were not distant from what people in other centers were experiencing too. Korça was distinguished by the Europeanized and westernized reality in the eyes of both Albanians and travellers.⁵⁷ This made the city a “little Paris”. This seems to be however only one from the “little Paris”-es flower-

54. The information on this event has been provided from printed newspapers of that time and from conversations and interviews with elder Korçarë. The information gathered about *Ballo* event in press can be found in the following materials: F. “*Ballo* eventoja e 28 nëntorit” [*Ballo* event of November 28th.] *Gazeta e Korçës*, 28 November 1925: 2; N. A. “*Ballo* eventoja e Voskopojarëve.” [*Voskopoja’s Ballo* event], *Gazeta e Korçës*, 29 December 1932: 2; Also the announcements on the event in *Gazeta e Korçës*, 24 November 1925: 2; *Gazeta e Korçës*, 4 January 1927: 4; *Gazeta e Korçës*, 27 February 1932: 2; *Posta e Korçës*, 26 November 1929: 4; *Gazeta e Korçës*, 12 March 1932: 4; *Gazeta e Korçës*, 29 December 1932: 2; *Gazeta e Korçës*, 25 February 1933: 2; *Gazeta e Korçës*, 16 March 1937: 2.

55. He came from a merchant class and had as educational background the French Secondary School of Thessaloniki and the Greek Commercial High School (Face 2010: 91-92; Fundo 2000).

56. On Thessaloniki and Bucharest see Jezernik 2004: 206-233; Mazower 2004: 185-292. For ‘starogradska stil’ see Opetcheska-Tatarchevska 2006: 435- 444.

57. See Durham 1905: 212; Della Rocca 1990: 17

ing in the late Ottoman and post Ottoman period.⁵⁸ Consequently, before coming to a general assumption, one has to consider the convergence and ramifications between internal dynamics and external imprints within city's life.

Kin ties and regional identities⁵⁹ had an important part in the organization of society. In the *Ballo* event there was a strong kin-based orientation alongside European accouterments like stylish long dresses, couple dances, and music. This was clearly stated in the advertisements' designation "Ballo Familjare". The term 'familjare' seems to have represented a sort of prerequisite to the organization, evidencing at the same time the institutional character of the 'family' name. This aspect came out also during conversations. People identified and described the protagonists in terms of family surnames and the status they had in Korça's society.⁶⁰ Kinship and friendship alliances remained a strong premise for regulating bonds between people. The same can be said about the centrality of the family system in people's life.

What was being negotiated in this period in the city was in my opinion, a preservation-innovation condition; namely, preservation of old patterns of the society, versus innovation, reshaping, or introducing new elements. Belief in the family system, respects, and esteem for the older generation have not been challenged. Nevertheless, the economic and socio-cultural changes in the interwar period put the urban-dwellers in front of more universal concerns, in which a social order dictated by class divisions produced different forms of social contrasts and divisions between groups.⁶¹

Until World War Two, Korça can be described as a society in which the elements of a heterogenetic type of culture were superseding those of an orthogenetic one.⁶² It was a society in which the intersection between local and

58. Jezernik 2004: 206-234

59. For a broader description on regional and local identities in Albanian speaking regions see Clayer 2012: 25-38.

60. Pirro Thomo evidences the same trait on the urban geographical perspective when he describes the kin based houses and family name streets (Thomo 1988: 84-85).

61. Thinking in a national perspective, it can be said that an Albanian working class was almost inexistent (See Jelavich 1983b: 184). From a local point of view, Korça's working classes made a quantitative unit in the 1920s and 1930s. Outcome from its existence was the creation of some working-class organizations (See Prifti, Shpuza 2007: 283-284; 316-317).

62. On orthogenetic and heterogenetic see Hannerz 1980: 87-89.

cosmopolitan elements was inculcated in the city as a consequence of 'secondary urbanization' and "the confluence of more cultures in one city."⁶³ This situation gave way to a particular condition of living the urbanity, which I would describe as fluctuating, controversial, insular in some cases, and very rapid in its uncontrolled progression. What produced this were on the one hand the borderland position, mobility, and erosion of population through migration; and on the other, the encounter between an imperial type of culture - in this case Ottoman - national movements, and westernization. For a better understanding of the mechanisms behind it, I think that the concept of "spontaneous" may be appropriate.

Lila Leontidou theorized in such term the type of urbanization forces that distinguished the Mediterranean city from the late nineteenth century. Drawing on Gramsci, these forces were

'spontaneous', in the sense that they [were] not the result of any systematic educational activity of the part of an already conscious leading group, but have been formed through everyday experience illuminated by 'common sense', i.e. by the traditional popular conception of the world, what is unimaginatively called instinct, although it too is in fact a primitive and historical acquisition.⁶⁴

The mechanism of "grassroots self-organizing"⁶⁵ forces oriented the urban development of Korça in this period. It reverberated in the community spirit, entrepreneurship initiatives, in the constant philanthropic initiatives⁶⁶, and the common congregations towards common goals. The spontaneous force of urbanization preceded industrialization and this was a principal reason why many forms of creativity did not "materialize at the workplace, but [...] in the local community, territory and region."⁶⁷ The same spirit of spontaneous initiative encouraged these forces and gave birth to societies, clubs, and local papers; in other words to a public sphere whose activities and programs tasted

63. Nettl 2003: 539

64. Gramsci 1971: 198-199. Cited from Leontidou 1990: 43

65. Cowgill 2004: 528.

66. N.D.N: 1923: 16-19, 68-70; Tirta 1999: 163; Thomo 1988: 20-21; Gogaj 2003b: 15-91.

67. Leontidou 1990: 43.

both communitarian and cosmopolitan. Determinant in all this was the force of the individual as an active agent.

What could not be avoided in any case was that the condition of spontaneity would reach, at a certain moment, its point of impasse. Need of solutions to different aspects of the social order and negotiation of local, national, and colonial roles brought into surface clashes and oppositions. On the meanwhile, internal problems in the Albanian society related to class distinctions and surplus intellectual production needed solution as well. As things turned out to be in the aftermath of World War Two, the solutions came, but not as spontaneous succession of ongoing processes.

Chapter 2

Urbanity and State-Socialism¹

Urban geography in Albania experienced many transformations after World War Two. For a largely agrarian economy with few urban centers, those years marked a series of modernization processes such as industrialization, building an educational system, and the extension of urban projects. Meanwhile, the country confirmed its adherence to the “communist world”². A proletarian dictatorship (*diktatura e proletariatit*) set to work.³ The leader, Enver Hoxha steadily outlined a very rigid doctrinal program for ruling the country. Remaining faithful to Marxist ideology and to Stalinist lines, he extended the power to dictate, guide and control many aspects (economic, political, cultural) of Albanian society.⁴

1. I am thankful to Gilles de Rapper for his feedback on an earlier draft of this chapter.

2. Hupchick 1994: 55. See also Jelavich 1983b: 336-405

3. Jelavich 1983b: 273-276. For a historical background: the first unit that adhered to communist views was founded in Korçë, in 1928 (See Prifti, Shpuza 2007: 284; 316 – 320). They did not have a definite political program and the initiative should be attributed to professors and students of the French Lyceum. They were highly educated and western university trained intellectuals coming from lower middle classes. Amongst them there was also the future leader of the country, Enver Hoxha. They approached communist and leftist ideas in response to political and social-economic problems of that period, including here economic stagnancy, fascism, and the power discrepancies between social groups. The events of World War II were going to configure differently the political forces, the protagonists engaged in it and the ideological line (For more details see Fischer 1999). In the aftermath, the most powerful was the Front of National Liberation, led by Enver Hoxha that eliminated almost immediately adversaries and established the ascendancy as leadership.

4. See for a broad description Jelavich 1983b: 297-298; 378-384; Pipa 1990.

General Remarks

Life in Korçë was closely related to and determined by this historical context. Therefore I came to realize that the things I was going to investigate needed some general remarks.⁵ An initial one goes to the way in which the regime configured its power, eliciting, in my opinion, three more or less distinct periods. During the first one (late 1940s up to the early 1960s), the regime politics were more concerned in establishing economic and political power but paid less attention to penetration of Party's directives in people's life. Practice of religious or secular events was not forbidden and the country was discreetly open to the outside world, especially to Eastern Block and to the Mediterranean area. This situation started to change from the early 1960s, the time when the close relationship between Albania and the Soviet Union came to a drastic end (1961). This was the moment when was propagated the Cultural Revolution that implied the 'two-front war' against imperialism and 'modern revisionism'; the discourse on the 'new man' (njeriu i ri), and on the 'further revolutionizing of life' (revolucionarizimi i mëtejshëm i jetës).⁶ Ramifications of these slogans produced a series of public measures and events that up to the early 1980s had a radical impact on Albanian society. This heralded the abolishment of any religious practice and the proclamation of Albania as an atheist country.⁷ There was an intensification of the so-called 'class war' (lufta e klasave), which to put it differently, represented nothing other than "persecution of one group of Albanian society from another."⁸ Invention of a standard [state] language grounded on the *Tosk* dialect condemned and censured irreversibly the Northern *Geg* one.⁹ Lastly, there was a closure of the country to the outside world and the development of an ethnic nationalist dis-

5. The approach presented here owes a great part to the stimulating work of Catherine Verdery because of her ability to combine local knowledge gained from her own research, careful analysis of Eastern European theorists works and the academic tradition of studies on societies and cultures in this region. Valuable sources have been also Bauman 1976; 1987; Hysi 2008; Sulstarova 2003; Vehbiu 2003; 2007; De Rapper 2006; Haraszti 1987; Schwander-Sievers 2002; Byron 1976; Fitzpatrick 1999.

6. See Blumi 1999: 303-326

7. Della Rocca 1990: 209 - 227

8. Vehbiu 2007: 188

9. Byron 1976; Beci 2010.

course that amalgamated doctrinal concepts such as people, masses, class struggle, with myths of nation, ethnicity, historic past and cult of personality.¹⁰

The last period coincided with the rule of Ramiz Alia (1985-1990), who came in power after Enver Hoxha's death. The leadership tried to remedy the previous rigid line with what looked to be an irreversible opening of the country to the outside world. Yet, I would be more prone to see this as a cautious and guarded strategy, rather than an unpremeditated openness. During its "life" the regime applied a constant harsh censorship regarding subversive or opponent elements, be they real or imagined.

Power relations and levels of influence among social groups need to be considered carefully as well. Existence of a surveillance system (*Sigurimi i Shtetit*) had many ramifications in people's life, in what they did and what they said. A state of fear, uncertainty, and doubt had been inculcated determining people's relations even in the most intimate spheres. This system operated through a network of informers and had a very extensive liability in denouncing rights. The regime had a clear visibility of all levels of its organization, from the highest (*Komiteti Qendror i Partisë-Central Party Comitee*) to the lowest (*Organizatat Bazë -Base organizations*), the former making a "shadowy system"¹¹ that could be found everywhere.

A thought-provoking aspect that comes out in conversations on this topic¹² is the way narrators articulate their thoughts when talking about this period. It comes very natural to mention Enver Hoxha as a dominant figure. Yet, one thing is to speak about agencies and policies Enver Hoxha instigated, and another is how his ideas and directives were further received and interpreted in

10. For very stimulating points on class terminology see Fitzpatrick 1999: 11-13. Fitzpatrick idea of 'corruption' is related to the concept of 'class' as a sociological category and its ideological use in the Stalinist system. This point of view shares many elements in common with Hoxha's conceptualization. On the role of myth in the history and for Albanian identities see Schwander-Sievers 2002: 3 - 25

11. Verdery 1996: 24. See also Fitzpatrick 1999.

12. I am particularly debted to the stimulating opinions of Eridan Imami, Liliana Katundi, Anastasia (Tefta) Kolaci, Violeta Plumbi, Vasil Kolaci, Afërdita Onuzi, Dhanai and Engjëll Pulaha, Kastriot Sulçe, Ardian Vehbiu, Gjergji Kote, Dhimitër Orgocka, Koço Qendro, Gjon Kapidani, Aldi Kuke, Skënder Stefanllari, Sherif Merdani and to many other Korçarë that I talked with during fieldwork.

the middle and lower levels. At this point, individuals with whom I worked with tended to be more pervasive. People acknowledged the power Members or Party representatives had, and also the ability and energy of apparatchiks that wanted to make a good impression on them. In any case there was a common propensity in their narration to use the third person plural 'they' (ata)¹³ during narration.

One of the most important elements in the way the regime worked was, in my opinion, 'speech performativity'¹⁴. I mean with this the leaderships' power of verbal discourse for enacting authority; for "criticizing", targets' hunting, and for the large "ideological saturation"¹⁵ that abounded the regime politics. The potentiality of speech performativity can be traced in Enver Hoxha's words, in his published *Works (Veprat)*, and the ways the latter were successively "re-written" by apparatchiks. Speech performativity aimed to legitimize modes of behavior and attitudes related to what individuals did, or did not; what they said and what they silenced.

The history of the quotidian realities during the Albanian totalitarian regime cannot be condensed in few pages. What I will present here are only a few stimulating points as background to the successive narratives of this dissertation.

Socialist Urbanity

The socialist system engendered a condition of urbanity that involved large industrialization projects. Key to any transformation of Korça's landscape was a 'top-down' disposition. Planned strategies and projects dictated by the state contrasted deeply with the grassroots self-organizing that prevailed before

13. "Tracking" names of informants or "spies" (spionë të sigurimit) has been a matter of "fashionable" interest in the post-communist era both from insiders and outsiders. Yet, rather than transparency, in many cases this turns out to be a matter of gossip, curiosity, and supposition rather than a meaningful engagement with such topics in the pursuit of knowledge.

14. I am drawing on Butler 1990. See also Austin 2000 [1962]: 239-252; Butler 1997; Woronov 2007: 647-672; Vehbiu 2007; Parker, Sedgewick 1995: 1-18.

15. Verdery 1996: 3

World War Two. Urban projects hallmarked the passage from private to state property. The establishment of a central state economy brought the decline of private entrepreneurship and as a consequence, the market place lost its central role in the city's economy.¹⁶

The regime officials enacted strong Manichean postures. The interplay between the 'old' system versus the 'new' one constituted a situation in which

[t]hose who adhere most resolutely to the principles of the new regime and those who have suffered more severely at the hands of the old regime want not only revenge for particular wrongs and a rectification of particular iniquities. The settlement they seek is one in which the continuing struggle between the new order and the old will be definitively terminated because the legitimacy of the victors will be validated once and for all.¹⁷

The dichotomy bourgeois/anti-bourgeois was integral to this Manichaeism. It materialized in concrete measures of statization (*shtetëzim*) and wealth confiscation. It surfaced also through symbolic forms in a web of negative attributes on the bourgeois life and the bourgeois elements.

Korça's bourgeoisie for example, was "traditionalist, arrogant, corrupted, mean, and conservative in every day life and in social life."¹⁸ This is how has been described by Enver Hoxha's in *Vite të Rinisë*, a memoir book focused on the time he spent in the city.¹⁹ A greater esteem and admiration he shows instead for the 'working classes', the people that had humble origins and with whom he seems to find continuously the time to talk and to listen to as a wary witness of their problems.

The reality that evolved during his rule brought many changes in the city's life. The old structure of *Mëhallas* faded away during the 1950s. The religious communities gradually lost their social role. Daily life was scheduled according to working timetables that functioned on the basis of socialist emulation,

16. Few private shops continued their commercial activity up to the early 1960s, before being "swallowed" by mass employment cooperatives and big state factories. Until the late 1980s, Korça counted nearly fourteen industrial and textile factories (Selenica 1982: 8).

17. Connerton 1989: 7

18. "tradicionaliste, arrogante, e korruptuar, shumë meskine dhe konservatore në zakone, në jetën e përditshme dhe jetën shoqërore." (Hoxha 1988: 68)

19. Hoxha was there in the mid 1920s as a student of the French Lyceum. In 1936 he came back again to work as a teacher.

the accomplishment of quotas (plotësimi i normës), and predated plans (realizimi i planit). Women became an active force in the working system and in education.

Among the many verbal 'formulations' that the discourse on the *Cultural Revolution* produced, the one that appears more frequently in the oral accounts is 'class war' (Lufta e klasave). Individuals comment on the ramifications of 'class war' suggesting that the campaign engendered from it affected their life in a particular way. What's more, this formulation arranges the events in terms of 'before and after': a period 'before' the 'class war' and the outcomes. Prevalence of this denomination is something related, in my opinion, to the fact that the main targets of the Cultural Revolution, of the 'new life', and of many other "new" things were the intellectuals, the youth, and the city (as a place counter posed to the village). These targets became subjects of a continuous ideological scrutiny.

The 'anti-bourgeois' formula was a constant in discourse: "the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois remnants in the consciousness of the people ma[de] a serious barrier to the complete victory of socialism in Albania."²⁰ Variegated aspects entered in the targets's orbit. The *Cultural Revolution* penetrated behaviors, styles, and manners. Elements such as fashion, haircuts, and accouterments went under revision. These measures were supposed to reconstruct as "new" the quotidian realms of individuals and in such situation it was not hard to speculate and conjecture about anybody that wanted to be different or presumably acted as such.

Lastly, during this period surfaced also the first signs of shortage and scarcity, a situation that would get worse in the following years. Lack of initially trivial consumer goods gradually came to include also the more essential ones. The apex of this situation was in the 1980s, a time when the empty shops displayed just one element of the deep status of deprivation.

20. Blumi 1999: 306

Institutionalization of Culture and Latent Experiences.

The socialist system carried out a series of measures for the institutionalization of culture. Up to the late 1960s were founded the most important cultural institutions in the country. Their organization can be described as a sort of amalgamation between western inspired formats (theaters, concert halls, art galleries, symphonic orchestras, revues) and Soviet models of state administration, such as the Palace or House of Culture, League of Writers and Artists, the House of Pioneers, and state established artistic troupes.

The House of Culture in Korçë played a central part in the organization of cultural activities. It was a multipurpose cultural center. It held classes in different artistic disciplines and performance groups (*trupa artistike*). In the first years of work (1946-1960), these groups did not fit into conventionalized ensembles. The musicians joined in small orchestras and instrumental groups. (Figure 1, Figure 2). Beginning in the 1960s, the ensembles became more organized in: folk ensembles, choral groups, the brass band, and the orchestra. (Figure 3). Although, a number of artists were usually engaged in the activities, the staff was very small: one director (theater director usually), an executive chief for music (*përgjegjës muzike*), a painter, a set designer (*skenograf*), and a folklorist-ethnographer (*përgjegjës folklori*). The institution included also the political bureaucrats representing the Party.²¹

The House of Culture can be described as first-order institution in the organization of cultural activities. In a second order can be listed the small-scale artistic groups, available on factories, corporates, and education institutions. They fitted into the invented artistic category of 'art amator' (amateur art). This presumed individuals who lacked higher artistic education but that represented a potential force in socialist ideology of culture. This is demonstrated by the fact that none of these initiatives existed as an independent or private form. A dictated strategy and plan instigated the activities, in which individual initiatives had almost no place.

21. I am thankful for the information to Dhimitër Orgočka, Josif Minga, Koço Qendro and Jorgaq Nano.

The cultural network was state-oriented and centralized. Tirana's hegemonic role in comparison to other Albanian cities made this structuring very explicit. What contributed to the legitimation of this supremacy were the centrality of all state institutions, the concentration in one place of universities, and the country's most prestigious educational institutes. Lastly, Tirana was the heart of regime élites and head bureaucracy. Any cultural institution in Korçë was a paired twin of those founded in Tirana and operated as a satellite orbiting around one main center: a local "satellite" for the theater, for the House of Culture, the radio station, the Theater, and the sector of Albanian League of Artists and Writers.

The regime created also its "own" cultural events: celebrative events, artistic meetings (*takime*), parades, and competitions. Presence of many artists and troupes followed, in my opinion, the same operational device of socialist emulation transposed in the field of expressive socialist culture. This can be illustrated by the large promotion and popularization of the competitive event type. The *festival* made the most significant case for its potentialities and for the enactment of paradigms of socialist culture.²²

Lastly, "socialist paternalism"²³ played an important part in shaping a double-faced dynamic. On the one hand, the regime provided large funding and sustenance for education, financial support and dissemination of cultural products. On the other, it stipulated a bureaucratic apparatus that had a particular care in choosing and determining the type of cultural products that had to be distributed. This should not be considered as simply a censorship apparatus, but as an accumulative and appropriative center for expressive culture, being that from intellectual backgrounds, or secular settings. Statization pertained not only to allocatable goods and estate, but also to ma-

22. Two Festivals can be retained as emblematic for the musical culture: Festivali Folklorik i Gjirokastrës (Folk Festival of Gjirokastrë), instigated in the year 1968 and conceived as a big manifestation of folk music. It was organized every five years. Folk state ensembles from different Albanian regions took part in it. Its organization involved many participants and had large media dissemination. The second was Festivali i Këngës së Lehtë (The Festival of Light Song) instigated in 1962 as an annual competition of light music.

23. Verdery 1996: 24-25. See also Vehbiu 2007: 49

terial and immaterial elements of expressive culture that could best “serve the nationalist-communist purposes of Enverist Albania.”²⁴

The institutionalization of culture channeled largely the type of activities. Official and state-oriented models, massive and populist in character dominated. Omnipresence of this framework is relevant when it comes to discuss forms of creativity, self-expression, and the little space they had within this frame. The ways in which these models mingled with everyday realities and the private spheres remained however complex. Numerous scholars have recently focused on elucidating and analyzing circumstances, events, and expressive behaviors concerning quotidian realms in socialist Albania.²⁵ Most of these case studies have been focused on rural areas and societies. Yet, the contributions display that differentiations between the official frame contexts and the non-official and intimate worlds were at stake. This is also the line of arguments presented here.

Coming into terms with the quotidian realms, one can distinguish an order of ‘everyday’ experiences, such as cinema or theater going, sports, radio listening, gatherings, and the ‘special-event’ order, such as birthday celebrations, parties, marriage celebration or the Sunday promenade. There was no split between them and the official institutional state culture as there was no amalgamation either. If we look at these ‘orders’ from the perspective of an individual’s personal involvement with the surrounding²⁶, it can be observed that human agency gave way to a number of unmarked experiences in people’s life, which I find appropriate defining as *latent experiences*. Latent because of their non-manifest, concealed, and silenced status surfacing in some

24. Schwander-Sievers 2002: 18

25. Ardian Vehbiu, for example, discerns and examines them from a linguistic standpoint, christening the phenomena of “subversive discourse” (*ligjërimi subversiv*) in opposition to the totalitarian discursive patterns of language (Vehbiu 2007: 50-57). In a similar vein Gilles de Rapper and Anouck Durand concentrate on family photographs and explore them in relation to state photography (De Rapper, Durand 2011: 210-229). Stimulating works are also the ones of Georgia Kretsi and Gilles de Rapper that scrutinize two imposing but very important categories in people’s lives: the “good biography” and the “bad biography” (Kretsi 2007: 175-188; De Rapper 2006). They explore the loyalty forms towards the regime and the implications they had in personal life, reputation, prestige, and social status of families or single persons in a community.

26. Hannerz 1980: 273

cases “everyday forms of resistance”²⁷. Latent because of insubordination agencies and subversive practices. Latent also for the demarcated condition of self-censorship, characterized by vulnerability and care of not being exposed. Latent, finally, for the ambivalence and ambiguity that these agencies may represent in different contexts and in different times both for the agents involved and for analysts that research them.²⁸

For analyzing the ways that such differentiations pertained to Korçarë’s life one should take into consideration the ‘fluidity’ of urban life. Ulf Hannerz defines that as the significant potential for personal change within an urban community²⁹ and the agencies of urban-dwellers “to bend social organization to suit their own circumstances and purposes.”³⁰ Urban life “is best thought of as an open system. While the object of investigation may be a small unit, its identity as urban is to be sought [...] not only in its internal relations but in its relations with units beyond it.”³¹ The thing is that the multitude units within it are not predictive of the whole but “in search of [a] whole to which they owe their status as parts.”³²

This framework of analysis can provide a better understanding of the close bound that individuals nurtured with the local universe. City’s life experienced a discreet closeness as a consequence of the impassable borders and the restricted mobility.³³ This had ramifications in the experiencing of place, being the latter specific concrete ones, such as home, the bar, the courtyard, the party meeting, the work setting; or the imagined conception of Korça. This is something that cannot be reconstructed at this point as a historical narrative. A phenomenological approach would be appropriate – the focus of the following chapter.

27. Scott 1987: 29

28. Ortner 1995: 175

29. Hannerz 1980: 269 and 269-276 for a wider explanation of the concept.

30. Hannerz 1980: 274

31. Reyes 2012: 202-203

32. Reyes 2012: 202

33. Albanians did not owe private cars. The reasons for people mobility had usually a utilitarian character. In border places such as Korça region there were also zones with a very limited circulation.

Chapter 3

Korçarë and their Experiencing of Time and Place

Memory

During my research, I found that from the 1990s Korçarë had set up different ways for expressing their spiritual links with the city. The first element that caught my attention was that in the last two decades an increasing number of memoirs for the city have been published.¹ Some of these accounts have been written during the communist regime but published only after it. The books tell about the city's past in a range of time periods from the first decades of the twentieth century to the 1980s. They fuse autobiographical perspectives, use of personal knowledge with slight investigations and surveys from archives or books. This is the case of Niko Face's book *Për Korçën: Dhe një kronikë (For Korça: One More Chronicle)*, and that of Vangjush Ziko's: *Korça, Qyteti dhe Kujtime (Korça, The city and Memories)*.

The Internet expanded further my survey on this matter. Several groups and forums caught my attention because a similar predisposition in the evocation of the city's past.² Here is what one reads in one of these websites:

1. Ziko 2012; Zoi 2001; Ballauri 2003; Face 2010; Fundo 2009.

2. See the URL Addresses: <http://korcapedica.com>; <http://hoxhalli.info>;

KorçaPedica is an encyclopedic site [...] with data and information about Korça and its nearby regions. Aim of this site is rather odd and difficult to achieve, that is we want to go against Time and to preserve what we can from its morsels... to establish a point of departure in the creation of an encyclopedic memory about Korçë [...] highlighting, emphasizing and saving what we think should not be lost.³

It is primarily the iconographic source that works out as a recurrent intermediary between acts of remembering and the past. This can be explained on the one hand with the practical availability that the World Wide Web offers to it, and on the other, with the potentiality it has for remembering. People post different photographs whose subjects range from portraits and sites of historic evocation, to more everyday ones. They are for the most part personal or family photographs. What transpires by looking also at the comments and feedback is the mutual aspiration to remember and share common events, people, and sites from the city's past.

More explicit in their research interests are two private collectors, Niko Kotherja and Mirgen Shamblli whose attention is basically emplaced in Korça's region and the city in particular. From the two of them, Niko Kotherja shows a great interest in historic perspectives, especially in Albanian nationalism the contribution of Korça and Korçarë patriots. In his opinion, many things have been neglected from historiography; protagonists have been ignored or underestimated, while data sources have been mistreated.⁴ Therefore, he collects everything that can be collected, as he once pointed out to me: from old books, photos, and other objects with historical significance.

A common target assembles authors of memoirs, webmasters and browsers, private collectors, and readers. All evoke a crumbling and disintegrating past constituted by personal experiences, events, particular places or stories.

http://www.facebook.com/groups/zgjohukorce/522298974469395/?notif_t=group_activity. The access dates in 12 February 2013. The latter is a Facebook group that counted nearly 1400 members in my last access.

3. "KorçaPedica është një site (pra, një vend ose një hapësirë elektronike), me informacion enciklopedik për Korçën dhe trojet për rreth saj. Qëllimi i këtij site, është pak i çuditshëm dhe i vështirë për tu arritur, d.m.th. qëllimi ynë është të ecim kundër rrjedhës së Kohës dhe të ruajmë prej kafshimit të saj, ç'të mundim, ... të hedhim pra bazat që të krijohet një kujtesë me natyrë enciklopedike për Korçën dhe trojet rreth saj, duke evidentuar, fiksuar dhe shpëtuar, gjithçka që mendojmë se ia vlen të mos humbasë." <http://korcapedica.com> (accessed 10 January 2013).

4. Niko Kotherja. Personal conversation. December 2012.

Posting old photos, providing information, curiosities, and narratives within Korça's geography is the way they choose to reify, share and make available this past. The idea of "preserving what [they] can [preserve]" besides implying nostalgia and the longing for a period that is over shows as well a strong consciousness and sensibility for place. It holds these dynamics and underlines how pervasive is the notion of 'topophilia' among Korçarë. Coined by Yi-Fu Tuan to identify "the affective bond between people and place or setting"⁵, this notion outlines the first approach to the interpretive framework for discussing memory, time and place among Korçarë.

Evoking the past in opposition to the present appears a rather persistent phenomenon in conversation with Korçarë. Their perception is crucial in molding topophilia. Nevertheless, I am not much concerned with the present and the ways in which the past is reverberated and experienced in the existing social order (although that would certainly make a future research goal). Instead, I would like to gain access to the corpus of collective or as recently conceived, "cultural memory"⁶, combining the perspectives of oral history, cultural anthropology and memory studies.

There is certain variability in how this corpus comes out in conversation. Elder people have more a personal and cognitive class of memories.⁷ Their comments are more enriched in particulars. For those born after World War Two, the particulars gradually lose details. Verbal reiterations become crucial in the accounts of younger generations, while the capacity of reproducing a certain behavioral act becomes more explicit. In the low budget documentary film *20 vjeç*⁸ placed in Korçë 20 years after the fall of communism, the director Borin Leka, departing from a *cinéma vérité* aesthetic captures different protagonists and talks with city-dwellers. At a certain point one of the leading "actors", a girl in her late 20s stares at an old photograph hanging on the wall of a

5. Tuan 1974: 4.

6. Ertl, Nünning: 2010.

7. Paul Connerton (1989: 21-23) distinguishes between three classes of memory claims: the class of personal memories, the cognitive memory claims and the third, those that reproduce a certain performance.

8. *20 vjet [Twenty Years Old]*, Directed by Borin Leka, 2011. Undistributed.

tavern. The photograph shows Korçarë families sited in an old famous bar “Birra Korça”⁹. Her comments go to *that time (në atë kohë)*, and *that particular place*, are fixed in that photograph. She comments on the gap that exists between a grandiose and glorified past and the empty present. A collective context of the past and its memorability becomes implicit in her narrative. This is something they have acquired as youngsters growing up in Korçë, just like she did, and fueled with the idea of the past. It is a performance, as Paul Connerton pointed out, through which “[they] are able to recognize and demonstrate to others that [they] do in fact remember”¹⁰, without being present in that reality.

When it comes to oral perceptions of history and the past¹¹, the ways in which narrators bring into the sphere of discussion stories, images, gossip, motifs, emotions, and outlooks disclosed many aspects concerning the communal life and their shared experiences. The period of economic and cultural changes that Korçë experienced during the first half of the twentieth century prevail in their perceptions of the past and the imagining of a city as a cultural capital. This admiration “tinted” with significance expressions such as *djepi i kulturës (cradle of culture)* or *Paris i vogël (Little Paris)* which have preserved till nowadays a strong affect in the imagination of every Korçar and that of Albanians more generally. This historical stage is counterpoised with the communist regime. If for the former narrators give positive and praising feedbacks, the latter appears much more fragmented in the experience of place and time as I am going to consider later on in this chapter.

Memory ‘works’ in a cyclical perception of time¹²: people’s memories are framed by stages or cycles, instead of linear chronological flows. During conversations, the frequent use of formats like: “në kohën e Enverit” (during Enver Hoxha’s regime), “në kohën e Zogut” (during Ahmet Zogu rule), “gjatë

9. “Birra Korça” also known as “Panda” indicates a beer bar and tavern where Korçarë (families, couples and male friends) used to go often for leisure, dance, and free time. (See also Chapter Four).

10. Connerton 1989: 23.

11. Abrams 2010; Portelli 1998: 63-74

12. Connerton 1989: 20

komunizmit” (in communism), “kur erdhi demokracia” (when democracy came) make this perception very explicit. Very particular to my suggestion is the phrase “at that time” (në atë kohë), whose indeterminacy is always covered by the discussion context and the consciousness with which those who hear you supposedly know in what stretch of time the discussion is placed. Lack of linear perception appears very explicit in the hairsplitting posture towards the period *under* communism and the one that preceded it, or the one that came after it.

The same cyclical perception guides narrators in their lifespan and ageing. During fieldwork, I talked mostly with elder people, or adults older than 35 years. To some surprise, I discovered that elder people did not show weaker remembrance capacities in comparison to younger people. They tried to be as accurate as possible in their feedback, sometimes even sharing and discussing any uncertainty with friends, colleagues or relatives. Experiences such as high school and/or university, marriage and family, working time and the age of retirement play an important role for both genders for determining four distinct stages of life: the childhood, the youth (rinia), adulthood and old age (pleqëria). The choice to single out and share memories on the youth cycle was the most common one. This belonged to a lifespan that comprised late adolescence and early adulthood. Marriage splits this stage from family life and the advancing of fully-fledged adulthood.

‘Communist Time’

The communist regime plays a vital part on the discourse about memory, place and time. It instilled a monumental and glorifying perception on the city’s past. On the meanwhile, the politics of the regime materialized what Lynn Abrams called “official memory”¹³, that is when state apparatuses and not single or distinct social groups, guided the accounts and the evaluations of the city’s past. Those that could narrate were strictly bound with these appa-

13. Abrams 2010: 101

ratures, which illustrates why the only author to write his memoir on the city during that period was Enver Hoxha with *Vite të Rinisë* (*Youth Years*).¹⁴

The past has been reconstructed so that it can better perform the discourse on nationalism, elaborating a “symbolic order” of collective cultural memory¹⁵ with selected or invented events, works, institutions, and places. One example of the ways the regime glorified the city’s singular place in the “official memory” has been epitomized through these verses:

Lumja ti moj Korça lule,
Q’i le pas shoqet e tua,
Si trimja në ball u sule,
Ta paçim përjetë hua¹⁶

This is a strophe from the poem *Korça* by Naim Frashëri¹⁷ that celebrated the city’s leading role in Albanian nationalist movement. On the contrary to the whole poem, which appears little known, this extracted text has been largely disseminated and learned by heart. Although not on purpose, the verses assemble of elements that were fundamental to the discourse of national - communism: braveness (*trimëria*), the idea of struggle, and lastly, the denomination of a classless society in the word ‘*shoqja*’ (comrade).

The communist leadership came into power claiming devotion and continuity of the nationalist programs of *Rilindja Kombëtare* (National Rebirth).¹⁸ The position held by the city during this period offered many potentialities for commemoration, such as the case of the small male elementary school of Korçë that opened in 1887 and which came to be regarded and praised as the first Albanian school. These processes of evaluation and retention shaped the “*lieux de mémoire*”¹⁹. The house was turned into the “Museum of Alphabet”

14. Hoxha 1988

15. Erli 2010: 4-5

16. Bless you flower, Korça, you surpassed your friends and rushed fearlessly in the front, we owe that to you for the rest of our lives.

17. Naim Frashëri (1846-1900) has been considered as the most prominent poet of *Rilindja Kombëtare* (National Rebirth) the political and cultural movement linked with the rise of Albanian Nationalism.

18. Vehbiu 2007: 45.

19. Nora 1989: 7-24

(Muzeu i Mësonjtores) (Figure 4). Commemoration of specific events and places takes place went in line with the “monumentalization of time”²⁰ that Michael Herzfeld distinguished from social time. Drawing on his conceptualization, it can be observed that the reductive, generic elements of monumental time and the everyday experiences and realities of social time²¹ intersect at the level of cultural memories for evoking sensed places.

An illustration can be *Lëndina e Lotëve (The Lawn of Tears)*, the commemorative place for migration. Korçarë experienced migration as a constraint, a problem that left no choice other than to leave the place one was born in order to gain the means of subsistence. Oral histories narrate that *Lëndina e Lotëve* was the station where migrants started their journey, saying goodbye to friends and relatives. Few descriptions can be found as to how *Lëndina e Lotëve* looked and no one can assert if this was the only place from where migrants departed. Emin Selenica, in a short history about Korça wrote that “[there] departed landaus, trolleys, muleteers and mules”²² while a photograph portrayed four people standing in front of the camera with a very sad appearance. The comment implied that the photo was taken there, but it did not have any identifiable background. Vangjush Ziko described this place as a lawn situated in Varoshi’s northern edge, surrounded by low walls and a small space allocated for prayers.²³ The city was left behind while in front lied the road towards Thessaloniki. Interestingly, in the 1970s, that is almost thirty years after the effective closeness of the country and to free mobility, this was recomposed as a small piazza with a stone fountain in the middle. Kristaq Papaargjiri carved the fountain as a symbol of tears and sadness, fashioning a picturesque place in which the nostalgia of urban dwellers seem to have been identified with.

20. Herzfeld 1991: 10

21. Herzfeld 1991: 10-16.

22. Selenica 1982: 65.

23. Ziko 2012: 251

Lëndina e Lotëve highlights the process in which particular places are rendered meaningful through both cultural processes and practices²⁴. Yet,

rather than being one definite sort of thing – for example physical, spiritual, cultural, social – a given place takes on the qualities of its occupants, reflecting these qualities in its own constitution and description and expressing them in its occurrence.²⁵

Powerful sites for these qualities are *sofati* and *sokaku*. *Sofati* represents a big stone situated either in the threshold of the house, or in its side). *Sokaku* is the alley with the cobble stone streets (*rrugicat me kalldrëm*).

The unity of these places can be traced in the specific order of mobility: from the doorstep (*sofati*), one moves to the cobblestone alley (*sokaku*), and then to the *boulevard* and beyond. They represented a pathway, going from the private sphere, to neighborhood life, then to public and official spheres. *Sofati* is the house threshold where usually women and children used to sit, talk, do handwork, play or watch people go by, *Sokaku*²⁶ joined the the private and the public spheres. Pirro Thomo described Korça's 'wide alley' (*sokaku i gjerë*) as a venue for work activities and free time of Korçarë.²⁷ The view of this alley turned out to be central to Korça's iconography. It made one of the favorite subject matters in the works of Vangjush Mio (1891-1957), a landscape painter (Figure 5), as well as to that of photographers like Kristaq Sotiri (1883-1970). With the urbanist changes from mid 1950s *sokakët* constituted the plurality of alleys (alternatively named also *rrugë*) of the old part of the city. Although they were monumentalized as the old historical center, for the inhabitants they contended opposite values in terms of their vital social life.

The functionality of these places can be explained in terms of 'paths' and 'nodes'²⁸. *Sokaku* and the streets are 'paths', that is, "channels along which the observer customarily, occasionally, or potentially moves" and while moving through them, they become predominant sites for observing place and the en-

24. Feld, Basso 1996: 7

25. Casey 1996: 27

26. This type of alleys were distinctive of urban centers in Southeastern Europe during the late Ottoman Rule. The word itself has a Turkish origin. One of the most famous sites is the Širok Sokak of Monastir/Bitola, for example.

27. Thomo 1988: 112

28. See for this the analysis of Kevin Lynch (1990[1960]: 46-73).

vironment. *Sofati* is a 'node', that is, a strategic spot and a junction from one structure to another (the private space to the public one). It is also a concentration of people at some point that gains importance and value in light of this use.²⁹

The experiencing of these places contributed directly to their vital role in holding memory. Joining the human geographic perspective of Yi-Fu Tuan with the phenomenological one theorized by Edward C. Casey³⁰, I would suggest that

[i]t is the stabilizing persistence of place as a container of experiences that contributes so powerfully to its intrinsic memorability. An alert and alive memory connects spontaneously with place finding in it features that favor and parallel its own activities. We might even say that memory is naturally place-oriented or at least place supported.³¹

Such a place-focused conception is implicit in the construction of a local identity. It can be traced not only in the ways that particular places in the city have been sensed³², but also in the forms Korçarë have sensed their place belonging in comparison to what laid beyond their local world, that being the region, the nation or any specific geography.

The questions that may arise at this point can be as to what can make experiences or practices more firmly emplaced. This is certainly one of the main prerogatives that my research is taking into consideration. As the arguments brought up here showed, cultural memory and personal accounts should not be overestimated. The importance that Korçarë give to cultural memories suggests that there can be close intersections between the information one can get and the historical socio-cultural contexts that are being investigated.

29. Lynch 1990[1960]: 47-48

30. Casey 2000; Casey 2009

31. Casey 2000: 186-187

32. Feld, Basso 1996.



Figure 1. The orchestra and the choir of the House of Culture, ca. 1955.
(Vasil Kolaci, personal archive)



Figure 2. The small instrumental ensemble of the House of Culture, ca. 1955.
(Vasil Kolaci, personal archive)



Figure 3. The orchestra and choir of the city, 1978. (Cultural Center Archive).



Figure 4. “Muzeu i shkronjave” (Museum of letters), 2004.



Figure 5. Vangjush Mio, Korça's Alley, 1949.

Researching the Repertoire

Chapter 4

Këngë Korçare and Urban Music Settings

Two Histories

Most academic studies on musical life in the city have been concentrated in the pre World War Two period.¹ They offer a respectable bibliography to begin with. Yet, I would like to sidestep it in this first moment and start with two sources on the history of music in Korça written by two protagonists: Vasil Ballauri and Dhimitër Fundo.² The reasons for this choice go to their active presence in shaping musical life in the city during the first half of the twentieth century. The reading of their work served tracking practices related to *Këngë Korçare* by considering also the ways they described them.

Ballauri starts his description with a useful observation for the purposes of this research. He singularized the role exercised from a small friendship male group he called *paré* (from Greek: companionship, company) as nucleus for describing a novel music experience in Korça. According to the author, *paré*

1. Bello 1985-1986; 1987; 2012; Koço 2002; 2003; 2004; Mato 1997; Nano 1967-1968.

2. Vasil Ballauri (1898 – 1962) was a merchant. He studied at the Greek Gymnasium in Korçë and then in the French Secondary School *Mission Laïque* of Thessaloniki. Dhimitër Fundo (1893 – 1980) came from merchant backgrounds and studied in the French Secondary School of Thessaloniki as well (On Fundo see also Chapter 1, p. 28) Ballauri wrote his memoir in the 1950s (Ilia Ballauri. Email conversation, 4 April 2013); Fundo in 1976 (Fundo 2000: 56). Due to the social status the authors had during communism - Ballauri as representative of the banned merchant class and Fundo as brother of L Lazar Fundo (1899 – 1944), one of the most emblematic communist Albanian figures in the early twentieth century - the materials have been published in the 2000s by private initiatives of their families.

and *mbledhka* (gatherings) denominated a widespread form of get-together among young males starting from the mid nineteenth century. They would play instruments (citing in particular the kaval (fyell), bouzouki, guitar and mandolin), tell jokes, funny stories, and sing songs. He classified the pieces as *Kantades* (*Kantadha*) coming from Cephalonia.³

Alongside *Kantadhes*, Vasil Ballauri mentioned the *serenata* (serenades) as songs about love, homeland, migration, and longing. He described performances of the latter as an outdoor night practice, evolving in *sokakë*, and featuring a male group. A general observation for both repertoires was their wide geography. The tunes came from “somewhere”, that is, the songs were Italian, *Qefalonike* (from Cephalonia), or they came from Romania (*Vllahia*), and Bulgaria. Each of these places is identified with routes of Korçarë mobility.

To a certain extent their approach in these writings is that of amateur ethnographers. Although lacking a methodological frame, they try to describe the music as an event, underlining the different repertoires, as well as its settings and protagonists.⁴ The distinction of the *parè* nucleus in their writings is very relevant. They highlight this practice as something that was not concerned with ritual, or celebrations, but with quotidian forms of enjoying free time, leisure, interactivity, and socialization.

The name *parè* came out of use but the group seemed to preserve many of the traits they described: male friendship-based, get-together practice, and singing *Këngë Korçare*. (Figure 6)

3. Ballauri 2003: 23-24. Corfu Island appeared in commercial routes of Korçarë and represented also a “point” of activism during the period of national awakening (1850-1912). See Clayer 2012: 111, 235, 379, 450-451, 621-622. I am also thankful to Nathalie Clayer for the e-mail exchange (16, 21 November 2012).

Kantadha spread in Greek cities of the hinterland during the same period described by Ballauri. Epitomized more in particular in the *Athenian kantades*, they have been described as a “melodious” type of song, inspired from southern Italian vocal traditions, based on triadic and thirds harmonies, and accompanied by guitar and mandolin. The Ionian Islands have retained the merit of popularizing them in the soundscape of Athens and Epirus. See Thomas J. Mathiesen, et al. “Greece.” *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.pros.lib.unimi.it/subscriber/article/grove/music/11694pg4> (accessed 27 February 2013). For *Kantadhes* and Italian influences in Greek popular music see also Milonas 2002: 44 -51; Holst 1994: 42-43; Fabbri In Press. For a cultural history of the Ionian Islands see Potts 2010.

4. Both had basic knowledge of music literacy: Dhimitër Fundo used to sing in *parè*. Vasil Ballauri was a self-taught musician. He played “classic” violin, (Ilia Ballauri. E-mail conversation, 11 March 2013).

Vasil Ballauri's observations leave space for two more insights. The first one is the religious distinction and prevalence of Orthodox Christians in these activities. Counting the separated lives and revitalization of the different social strata of Christian community, it can be presumed that the Christian *Mëhallë* represented the setting where this took place. What they described more in detail, because they probably knew it best, was this section of the city. The second insight goes to place and topophilia. Ballauri and Fundo did not hide the predilection they had for the city and "its" music. Both wrote these chronicles with a time distance, at once old and acquainted with the significance that this urban culture acquired with time. The firmly embedded self-consideration of themselves as Korçarë and the nostalgia for the past are inherent to their writings. This perception reveals the affective bonds with place and transpires the exclusive conception they have when describing the city's life.

The topophilic exclusivity guides the authors in careful and sometimes meticulous descriptions of places conceived as containers of certain music-practices. This is one of them:

Earlier than 1910, in Çezmat e Arrave square, today "Themistokli Gërmenji" park, where Llazovica and Ngjelo Tellali used to wash [clothes] as an old song told us; at dusk, small groups used to gather. Crafters, apprentices, workers, and youngsters from all social classes were among them. Once gathered, they started singing (ia fillonin këngës) accompanied by flute, bouzouki, baglama, or mandolin and guitars. They sang *popullore* songs and *other*⁵ songs. This lasted until late night.⁶

It cannot be asserted how these songs sounded.⁷ Use of instruments may suggest that the repertoire of *kantadha* and *serenata* was included in the *other*

5. My italics.

6. "Para vitit 1910, sheshi i Çezmave të Arrave, sot kopështi "Themistokli Gërmenji", aty ku lanin Llazovica me Ngjelo Tellalin, sikunder thote kenga e vjeter, ne kete shesh, porsa fillonte te ngrysej mblidheshin togje-togje, zanatcinjte dhe çirakët e dyqaneve, punëtorë dhe të rinj të çdo klase dhe ia fillonin këngës të shoqëruar me fyell, buzuk, bakllama ose mandolina dhe kitara. Këndonin këngë *popullore* dhe këngë të tjera. Kjo vazhdonte deri në orët e vona të nates." In Fundo 2000: 50. My Italics.

7. Considering the time when he wrote down this material, it can be presumed that the categorization of *popullore* probably derives from the way that the word was employed in the Albanian context, that is for folk or traditional songs. Use of *other*, I believe, is for identifying *serenata* and *kantadha* as song types that do not fit in the traditional or folk categories.

'category', at least if we compare it with Vasil Ballauri descriptions that *kantadha* and *serenata* were sung "parè-parè" in Korça's *sokakë*, late at night.⁸ Significant in this narrative is the fact that such open-air night music conferred to outdoor places, being that *sokaku* or the square, a new public dimension. And it is this dimension that seems relevant to them.

"Çezmat e Arrave" known as "Themistokli Gërmenji" park gained during this period the attributes of a place for public music performances. It exerted an attractive power not only for "night" performances. Other accounts note that not later than 1908 there used to perform two different ensembles⁹: a brass band called "Banda e Lirisë" ("Freedom Music Band") and a *mandolinata*. The former was directed by an Italian musician who was hired from Egypt, the latter was integral to society named "Anagenisis-Rilindja", (from Greek: Rebirth).¹⁰

Mandolinata was a mandolin-based ensemble¹¹ that in my opinion "reached" the city by close contact with Hellenic culture and by migration. The earliest documented source I have for what Korçarë called *Mandolinata* is a photograph of 1912¹², portraying an ensemble of youngsters with guitars and mandolins (Figure 7). Historical accounts note that in the city were active also small groups of four-five members that played on their own.¹³ The photographs in Figure8 and Figure9 show groups from the 1930s.

The most relevant aspect to be pointed out is that activity of these ensembles configured a public dimension of music and interactivity that was not related to ritual or religious events. Simultaneously with socio-cultural and political developments, the context of music-making was changing. And when

8. Ballauri 2003: 27-28

9. Bello 2012: 33-34; Mato 1997: 102.

10. For their activity see Mato 1997: 101-103; Bello 1985-1986; 2012: 17-39. It should be pointed out that these organizations acted in concomitance with political programs. It is the moment of creation of two opponent fronts in the city: one sustaining the Greek oriented nationalist projects and the other the Albanian ones (this consisted by Albanian speaking and also Aromanian families). See Clayer 2012: 592-598.

11. The mandolin based ensembles acquired a large popularity from the mid nineteenth century in different countries developing vernacular forms in different places. See for this Sparks 1995.

12. I am very thankful to Gjergji Bardhushi for this photograph and the information he shared with me.

13. Nano 1967-1968: 57-65

the context changes, Murray Schaffer observed, changes all the rest.¹⁴ Influential in this change was the condition of urbanity. With a spontaneous force, it constituted, metaphorically speaking, a “porous matter”¹⁵ that absorbed these sonorities and integrated them in Korça’s expressive culture.

Whether *Serenata* or *Kantadha* sounded in this early stage how Korçarë described them, is something that cannot have a definite answer. The sources from this period are a number of *Songbooks* (*Këngëtore*) printed during the first half of twentieth century.¹⁶ For the most part, the lyrics they contain have constituted core pieces in the repertoire of *Këngë Korçare*. The advertisements in local papers suggest that the albums circulated and that the popularization of this repertoire dated from the early 1900s.

Thoma Nassi

The interwar years were distinguished by regional and national stability. A major role in organizing music life in the city should be attributed to the appearance of highly western-educated musicians. The first comment goes to the agencies of the American-Albanian migrant Thoma Nassi (1892-1964) that settled in Korçë with an instrumental band of self-taught musicians coming from the USA.¹⁷

Thoma Nassi’s stay in Korçë lasted five years (1920-1925) but his imprint was felt even after he left. He was the author of a number of songs for voice and piano that seem inspired from the style of ‘parlour music’ or ‘drawing room songs’¹⁸. Words evoke sentimental or pastoral themes from Albanian lyr-

14. Murray Schaffer 2001: 350

15. The conception of “porosity” comes by Walter Benjamin (1978: 163- 173).

16. Sakoli 1909; Grameno 1912; Ilo 1916; Koti 1923; Koti [193-].

17. Thoma Nassi migrated to the USA at an early age. He undertook studies of music at the *New England Conservatory of Music*. On completing his studies he became active in the Albanian diaspora, directing a number of ensembles such as *mandolinata* and choral groups. After WWI, the Albanian American Diaspora has been distinguished for its very politically active involvement in Albanian nationalism. Among the cultural initiatives was the foundation in 1917 of a brass band named *Vatra*, comprising mostly self-taught musicians. Nassi took the band’s direction. In 1920 *Vatra* travelled to Albania in what can be described as both a political and musical pilgrimage mission journey. After a tour in south Albania, the musicians settled in Korçë. On Thoma Nassi see Minga 2006a: 161- 196; Jacques 1995: 370-372

18. See also Koço 2004: 51

ic poetry of the time and are written for operatic singers (principally male voices). Successively, the songs were integrated in the repertoire of *Këngë Korçare*. One of the most popular is *Mulliri (Mill)*. According to a short note in the sheet music, this piece was performed for the first time in Korçë in 1922. It is written for three operatic singers (baritone, tenor, and mezzo soprano), piano, and chorus. The song has a pastoral subject and is in an AB form, with a first part as a declamatory dialogue between the three singers, foursquare sections, and simple chord progressions. The B-part is the chorus response.¹⁹

19. *Kënga e Mullirit*. Music by Thoma Nassi; Lyrics by Remzi Qyteza, Published by Thoma Nassit. Tiranë. Vlorë: Shtypshkronja Giovanni Direttore & C., [ca. 1925].

Fjalë R. QYTEZA **KENGA E MULLIRIT** Muzikë TH. NASSI

Moderato

Pianoja *mf*

Bassi 9 *p* Djel - li vër - - - ti - - tet Bo - ta rru - - tu - - llon.
Mi je - - tën to - - në Ko - ha po - - ka - - lon.

Tenori *f* Vit e - - - dhe sha - - kuj Shkojn'e s'kup - - to - - hen

Bassi 17 *dim e ritardando* Mjo - risht si njer - - zit Vdo-sin ha - - - - - ro - - hen. *pp*
dim e ritardando

21

M. Soprano

U - ji vër-ti-tët gu-ri rru-tu-llo-n Di't'e-dhe na-të mu--lli-ri pu--non.

mf

Kori

mf (kori me gojë mbyllur)

Pianoja

29

Bassi

Grar'e-dhe mi--sër viju's dërr---mo-hen bu k8 ga-----to-her

mf *f* *p*

Mjell's dhe bru--më

I II

mf *f* *p*

35

Kori

Kithi o u-----jë Fry mo'j e-----r8

p *f* *p*

39

Vër - tit gu - - - - - rë Si nga her

nga he - - rë

43

o soli
gala

Rith dhe fry shum' me të shpejt. Be - - je mje - - llë t'o-llë dhe të leht.

mf

Cori

Rith dhe fry shum' me të shpejtë. Be - - je mje - - llë t'o-llë e të leht.

mf

The image shows a musical score for a song. It consists of two systems of music. The first system, starting at measure 39, features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are 'Vër - tit gu - - - - - rë Si nga her' and 'nga he - - rë'. The second system, starting at measure 43, features a solo vocal line and a chorus line, both with piano accompaniment. The lyrics for both are 'Rith dhe fry shum' me të shpejt. Be - - je mje - - llë t'o-llë dhe të leht.' and 'Rith dhe fry shum' me të shpejtë. Be - - je mje - - llë t'o-llë e të leht.' The score includes dynamic markings like 'p' and 'mf'.



Kejo Këngë u këndua të parën herë në Festivalin e Shqerisë Artet të Bukura në Korçë me 7 Korrik 1922 me soloist dhe stereitës të korit Z. Mihal Kosma, dhe u përshërit në koncertat e pastajme dita herë në kerkimin e popullit.

The song relies on western European song models, an approach that inspired largely Nassi's work.²⁰ His agencies in shaping musical life in Korçë were manifold. He directed different ensembles; taught [western] music; wrote articles in local papers; organized activities and was the principal founder of *Shoqëria e Arteve të Bukura (Society of Fine Arts)*.²¹

The brass band directed by Nassi popularized opera repertoire and symphonic pieces. They used to perform twice a week in outdoor concerts, in "Themistokli Gërmenji" park. As platform served a soundbox for brass bands (cassa armonica), built in the middle of the park (Figure 10).²² The audience stayed round it and listened to pieces that Nassi adapted and arranged. This is an autobiographical note on the event:

The Band begun playing two open air concerts every week at Kopshti Themistokli Gërmenjit. Our programs were of classical music. A typical one would consist of an overture, a symphonic movement, operatic selection, usually Wagner, A Strauss waltz, then arrangement of Albanian songs for community singing.²³

Indoor performances of Thoma Nassi were shaped as a saloon-type of music. Listeners attended him playing in duo (flute and piano) with his wife, alternated with operatic singers. Common presences in these events were also professors of the French Lyceum.²⁴

20. Koço 2003: 53

21. The *Society of Fine Arts* (December 1920) was an artistic organization undertaken from a group of musicians and artists. Their scopes were arts activities. The Society was divided into three main sections: music, theater and art (Mato 1997: 103-108).

22. This platform was made for brass bands' performances. It cannot be asserted with certainty when it was built. According to the oral accounts that it existed from the early 1900s, the "Freedom Band" performed in the same place as well. Elders used to call it *plate* (plat).

23. Thoma Nassi. *Speech delivered for the Albanian-American student organization at Harvard in the year 1960*, 1960: 3.

24. The French professors were active during Nassi stay and also after he left. See Ballauri 2003; Koço 2003; Bello 2012. In his unpublished memoirs the composer Kristo Kono noted that in mid 1930s he and three French colleagues used to play in a quartet. The group included a soprano, him playing the clarinet and the two others in piano and cello. Kono had adapted a repertoire that could fit the ensemble and they rehearsed in one of the French professors homes. (Kono [Unpublished typewritten manuscript])

Even earlier than 1920 the smaller clubs or associations exerted their influence in shaping outdoor concert formats.²⁵ The establishment of the *Society of Fine Arts* aimed giving to these initiatives a more institutionalized status. Scholars point out that among the three of them (music, theater and art), the music sector had been the most operative²⁶ acknowledging also that many successive enterprises stepped on the same model.

The articulation of a national culture with western-European models was implicit in these agencies. In my point of view, it should be said that the urban setting was the one that favored the initiatives. The concrete outcomes remained tied to the city and to the grassroots type of forces. The same can be said about the pieces that Nassi composed: they entered as 'standards' of the urban repertoire. After Thoma Nassi, other highly educated musicians like Sotir Kozmo, Kristo Kono or Kostaq Osmani²⁷ undertook similar steps. What all these initiatives had in common was the short life: exhibiting much energy at the beginning, but lacking an institutionalized framework, they were soon withdrawn and rearranged again after some time under a different society.

The Song Practice from the 1930s to the 1960s

The agencies of these highly educated musicians contributed in shaping conventionalized and exclusive spaces for an "art song" performance, "classic" arrangements, and concert audience.²⁸ On the meanwhile, vernacular and participatory forms centered on song-making as a day-to-day social activity evolved in the city - in many cases featuring the same protagonists.²⁹ The most common practice was based on the get together participatory forms (*mbledhka*, *picnincs*).

25. Here should be mentioned an Italian musician, Annibal De Pasquale that was hired in 1908-1909 as leader of the "Freedom Band". He left Korçë in 1911 and came back again in 1927, hired again this time from the Mayer Institution for leading the City's Band (Koço 2003: 19; Nano 1967-1968: 18).

26. Mato 1997: 103; Koço 2003; Bello 2012

27. See Glossary.

28. See Koço 2004.

29. Tërpinini 2003: 83

Parè gathered and played. Each quartier had groups; they were friends; were young; probably in love with girls. It was normal to hear them sing. Sometimes, played at people's courtyards. At that time, [1930s – 1940s]³⁰ no one locked the house doors. It was safe. So they entered, played music and then went away. In my father's yard for example, they used to enter quite often.³¹

Thanks to the names that my interviewer mentioned, I was able to trace a photograph of this *parè* group (Figure 11).³²

The earliest singing practices had also a kin-based character. I contacted members from *Lalazi* family (*Lalazët*) and the *Bimbli* family (*Bimblarët*).³³ Pirro Bimbli (b.1941), one of the oldest members, narrated that *Bimblarë* (undermining males) used to sing both *Kantadha* and *Serenata* and did so since his grandfather was young, that is, from the first years of the twentieth century. The family's history had migration as a backdrop and was among those distinguished for the nationalist activism.³⁴ Singing was perceived as a particular trait of his family tradition and he tended to specify this symbolic bond³⁵ pointing out that *Bimblarë* sung with *parè* and also at home. Among the pieces that he singled out to me was Thoma Nassi's song *Mulliri*. Asked whether this choice meant something in particular Pirro Bimbli replied that the latter had a special place in their family's repertoire. It enlivened the tradition as a tune that passed from one generation to another.

The conversations I had with the siblings Koço Lalazi (b. 1956) and Jorgjeta Lalazi (b. 1958), members of *Lalazi* family showed a different conception. The family tradition was not so strong in them. Rather, a particular relevance in this practice was attributed to the figure of their father.

We sung in the courtyard altogether. We were a lot; made a choir. My father played a little bit violin and kaval (*fyell*) and sung, of course; the uncle played mandolin and bouzouki. My father had his own *parè* of friends with whom he

30. He did specify however that the practice stopped during Wartime.

31. Viktor Çani. Personal Conversation. July-August 2012

32. I am thankful to Mishel Papakozma for the information and the photograph.

33. People used in their oral accounts the family surnames suggesting an extended family format and the idea that the song practice was passed from one generation to another.

34. For the nationalist activism of Bimbli family see Clayer 2012: 593. Dhimitër Fundo (2000:49-50) mentions the members singing in *parè*.

35. Pirro Bimbli is a dentist.

gathered and sung. He was fond of Tango [songs]. We learned many songs from him.³⁶

Singing these songs were not so much connected with the family, as they were part of socialization activities they shared with friends or work colleagues.

The research for song locales revealed that the geography of practice was not confined to the city but encompassed also adjacent rural areas. Pandi Bello and Eno Koço confessed that primarily Christian villages of Upper Devolli like Drenovë, Hoçisht, Polenë, and Dardhë had been distinguished in the practice of gathering and singing this repertoire.³⁷ In a broadcast radio programme of 1993, participants gave interesting feedback about this practice, evidencing migration legacies and the close bonds with the city.

Useful turned out to be handwritten notebooks with song lyrics. The ones I am citing here were written by Koci Zdruli, native from the village of Dardhë³⁸ (Figure 12). There were two notebooks, containing 26 lyrics each. Skilled as a song collector³⁹, Koci Zdruli wrote down the words, including also supplementary information. He indicated also descriptions of the performance setting. One of them goes like this:

Vangjo Raci brought it [the song] from Korça in June 1951 – he came late at night, drunk, and we did *serenatë* until dawn. With Dunkën, Pemën, M. Pani, V. Poro, K. Zdruli.⁴⁰

The info highlights dates, song provenance, and in some cases, place of performance. Dates range from 1930s to the mid 1960s, but those that prevail are the 1950s. Koci Zdruli indicated where he heard the songs for the first time; or the “place” they “came from”. According to the information he wrote down, the city of Korçë appears as the main “supplier”. Additionally he denoted genres like tango, waltz, polka, and for some songs he wrote: “waltzer-

36. Jorgjeta Lalazi. (Personal Conversation. August 2012)

37. Koço 2003: 20; Bello 2012: 25

38. I am very thankful to Kostika Zdruli for sharing this material with me.

39. Koci Zdruli (1916- 1979) was a song collector (folklorist). He collected folk songs lyrics from Upper Devolli (Devolli i Sipërm). See Zdruli 1987.

40. “Na e solli nga Korça në korrik të 1951 – ardhi natën i pirë e bëmë serenatë gjer më mëngjes. Me Dunkën, Pemën, M. Pani, V. Poro, K. Zdruli”. Zdruli [Notebooks with transcribed song lyrics no. 1].

serenatë". The repertoire contained in these notebooks was influenced by popular songs styles of that period. The lyrics in Greek language came from operetta shows and revues.⁴¹ Those in Italian were canzonettas. When the songs were adapted, Zdruli wrote the Albanian text in front. In other cases he simply specified for example: "muzika sovjetike" (soviet music).

These cases allow me to make three observations on this "musicking" experience⁴². The first concerns use of the term *serenatë*. "Bëjmë serenatë"; "dalim serenatë" (go out for *serenade*) has been used by many individuals I have interviewed. Koci Zdruli and Viktor Çani employed the word both for labeling a type of song and also for defining the performance. "Doing serenatë" (bëjmë serenatë) instead of just "sing serenatë" suggests that in their perception this represented one type of performance. They used to sing on different occasions and "did serenade" in some distinct circumstances, that is, outdoors, nights, in some cases as a courtship or flirting situation.

My second observation pertains to the protagonists. My narrative has largely employed oral and written accounts of people that had a direct experience with song practice. Getting close to these sources, I realized that *Këngë Korçare* had their own protagonists, agents concomitant to the practice. They conceived it as a 'lived experience' for socialization, amusement, entertainment, and also as an expression of intimacy and emotion, aspects that I will consider later on in this dissertation.⁴³ The third observation is of the effects of urbanism in adjacent areas. The spread of this practice indicates that these experiences should not be circumscribed to the city. Defining these songs as urban does not suppose referring only to the city's habitat. Yet, the latter retained a central role for this experience.

Examining this music as a phenomenon in place, it can be said that "light genres" had integrity in city's life. Conversations highlighted spaces that were so to say, musically active. Alongside the ones that, to me, were the most ap-

41. I am thankful to Ioannis Tsioulakis and Apostolos Poullos for their helpful indications on popular music trends in Greece from the 1920s up to the 1950s.

42. Small 1998

43. See Part Five.

parent such as *sokakë*, concert venues, and domestic spaces, people recounted also about ballroom dances, cinema going, and radio listening. The descriptions evinced settings where “an intensive generation of shared meanings occur[ed]”.⁴⁴

Live Music

One of the most famous places that was described to me was *Parajsa* (The Paradise) tavern, situated in the upper side of the city.⁴⁵ Ina Osmalli, the daughter of Kostaq Osmalli⁴⁶, showed me photographs of her father, taken in the early 1930s. In one of these photos (Figure 13) are shown four musicians: two of them hold a guitar, one a mandolin, and the fourth is close to the drums. They wear uniforms and appear in a very “showman” pose. The specificity and popularity of this place seemed to be the ballroom dance floor and it being independent venue for the orchestra.

Descriptions of this place as musically active appears also in the accounts of *Këngë Korçare* singers:

We used to gather at *Panda* [that is another name for *Parajsa*]. I was younger than others. Joined them because they were a good *parè*. There was Xhuvi Naço. He played the Hawaiian guitar and was the leader; Ilo Kotoko was a singer, and then Pandi Zabuni, with the guitar. We had our own preferred table and since we were used to this place, we left also the instruments there.⁴⁷

Central in the narration of Ridvan Shëllira is the idea of gathering and singing as a collective experience (*mbledhka*). The encounter was not casual and they did not meet there by chance. They were “there” to sing.

Viktor Çani, once a performer in these venues, provided some information on the type of live music. He describes their repertoire as “light music of that time”, citing, among others, melodies like *Bonjour tristesse*, *La vita è un paradiso*

44. Hannerz 1980: 287

45. The alternative name of *Panda* derives probably by the owner’s name: Pandi - *Pandi-Panda*

46. Kostaq Osmalli (1908 – 1984) was a music director and composer. He was the historical artistic director of *Lira* group and the first to collect, transcribe and arrange *Këngë Korçare*. (See also Glossary).

47. Ridvan Shëllira. Personal Conversation July 2012; September 2012

di bugie.⁴⁸ He cited also popular/traditional tunes coming from the Socialist Republics. Asked if western-style musics were permitted, he replies: “We had to be careful, you know, but it was not so problematic. At that time, things were more liberal.”⁴⁹

The musicians did not own any published editions of the music they played. Viktor Çani observed that his colleague, Abaz Hajro⁵⁰ had a friend in Italy, that from time to time, used to send him printed versions from *Sanremo*-songs.⁵¹

I do not know whether someone inspected the envelopes, but we used the materials and did not have problems. Yet, there were also tunes we heard at the radio, or from movies, *Bonjour Tristesse* for example. Printed music repertoire was unavailable. When needed Abaz [Hajro] transcribed the melody, but we played mostly ad hoc.⁵²

The sources therefore included Albanian, Italian, French songs, and pieces coming from the soviet republics.

The cinema

A ubiquitous presence in the quotidian “entertainment” formats during this period is attributed to the movie theater.⁵³ My interviews showed that the cinephilic disposition developed especially among youth and young adults. The people with whom I talked with singled out musical movies and described the cinema as a very musically active place. Local press before World

48. Juliette Gréco. “Bonjour tristesse”. Music by G. Auric, Lyrics by A. Laurents. France: Philips B 76 417 R, 1958. Track A1; Luciana Gonzales. *La vita è un paradiso di bugie*. Music by N. Oliviero, Lyrics by D. Calcagno, 1956. This is a *Sanremo* song (See below). It was classified third in the Italian Song Festival in the year 1956.

http://www.radio.rai.it/radioscigno/trasmettiamo/scheda.cfm?Q_IDSCHEDA=445 (accessed 22 September 2013).

49. Viktor Çani, Personal Conversation, July-August 2012.

50. On Abaz Hajro see Glossary and Chapter Eleven, Spanja Pipa: A Case Study

51. *Sanremo Song Festival* is a national song competition in Italy (Festival della Canzone Italiana or Festival di Sanremo) held annually in the city of Sanremo. It was instigated for the first time in 1951 (For more on Sanremo see Facci, Soddu 2011). This *Festival* played a referential part in the development of light music in Albania.

52. Viktor Çani. Personal Conversation. July-August 2012.

53. The earliest movie theaters in the city were *Majestic*, opened in 1927 and *Lux*, opened in 1926 (Minga 2006b: 25). The former continued after WWII in addition to *Kino – Teatri Çajupi*, and *Republika*. Summers there was also an open-air cinema, called *Kinema Verore*. For a brief account on cinema-going see Ilir Buzali. *Korça dhe Kinema Mania*. <http://www.balkanweb.com/kulturë/2691/korca-dhe-kinema-mania-147721.html> (accessed 9 September 2013).

War Two is very helpful for it advertised musical movies. After the 1950s the information on film distribution and screenings is very much reduced. Newspapers advertised mostly soviet films. However, on examining oral accounts, it seems that what audiences attended was in fact much more varied, including neorealist Italian films and many musical movies, in the popular entertainment genres of operetta, vaudeville, and musicals.⁵⁴ Among those to be singled out were soviet music movies like *Volga – Volga* (1938), *Kubanskie kazaki* (1949); films in Spanish language like *La Edad del Amor* (1954), *Serenata en Mèxico* (1956), *Los dos Golfillos* (1961)⁵⁵; or from the Italian *musicarello* of the 1950s. Many comments pertained to the voices of popular artists like Luciano Tajoli, Beniamino Gigli, Gigliola Cinquetti, Sofia Vembo, or Claudio Villa and then Sara Montiel, Lyobova Orlova, and Lolita Torres.

The interconnection between music, cinema and urban music practice emerged more clearly during a conversation with the 91-year-old singer Dhimitër Kreshova. He recalls having had few experiences as a singer in the 1940s, in Bar *Panda* and in Radio Korça. After World War Two, Kreshova worked as a decorator, confessing enthusiastically that there was no street in Korçë he did not sing.⁵⁶ Enthusiasm or not, he became very popular among his contemporaries who used to call him by the nickname Taqkë Karmeni, because of his preference for Spanish Songs. Asked about his approach to music, his comment was:

I went very often to [cinema] “Lux”. At that time [1930s – 1960s], they screened many movies with music. I remember a beautiful singer, Marta Eggerth⁵⁷. I tried to imitate her voice; also many others that sung like her. I loved Spanish songs. Italians too, but the Spanish ones were my favorites; I listened to them at the movies; at the radio. You know, my voice sounded girlish. Some people called me Taqkë Çupka (Taqkë the girl) and because of that I could not sing in a choir or perform for the audiences. But I did not care.

54. The screenings of Italian films dated from the 1940s up to the early 1960s and some of them were ‘war reparations’. The oral accounts note that Mexican Musicals and Soviet Musicals were popular as well.

55. Titles are in the original. The years are based on the Internet Movie Database.
<http://www.imdb.com> (accessed 13 March 2013)

56. Dhimitër Kreshova, oral comment Transcribed from Radio Korçë 1993: *Serenata Korçare-Programme*, Episode 5.

57. Marta Eggerth (b.1912) was an operetta singer.

I had my work and I sang. What really mattered to me was the impression I made to people; I wanted to astonish them.⁵⁸

Dhimitër Kreshova had a voice register that shifted between a *leggero* tenor and a countertenor. He used to sing songs both in their original language and in the Albanian adapted version, although he did not study these languages. There was strong cinematic imagery in the manner he performed the songs, although none of his performances took place as on stage presentational performance.⁵⁹ What seemed to me more impressive was the way he 'read' his own performance, entangled in the idea of amazement and astonishment.

The cinema emerges therefore as the medium that more palpably than others brought Korça's audiences close to the aesthetics of popular entertaining genres such as variety shows, musicals, operetta, or melodramas. This pertained either to the aural perception, or to the visual level. What I am suggesting here is that *Këngë Korçare* were integral to a "multiple text"⁶⁰ in which to music was attributed more a "disproportionate power and effect"⁶¹. This does not exclude however elements such as fashion or life-style. What should be emphasized at this point is the fact that through the 1960s this reality was going to change.

The Radio

An important role in the scene of music-making was attributed to broadcast radio music. Elder people I talked with commented enthusiastically on the establishment of this medium in the city and to its music programmes. The Italian Fascist government funded radio transmissions' in Albania. This was part of a large project of radio diffusion and propaganda purposes in the zones that Italy had under its Suzerainty.⁶² A radio station was founded in Tirana, in

58. This paragraph is based on transcriptions from two different sources: the first is the transcription from *Serenata Korçare-Programme*, Episode 5. The second is from a personal conversation I had with him in January 2013.

59. With the exception of his appearance in *Serenata Korçare-Programme*, in 1993.

60. Middleton 2000a: 8

61. Middleton 2000a: 9.

62 For a detailed historical account on that see Monteleone 1976. More in particular on the Albanian case: pp. 146-168

November 1938.⁶³ Radio Korça was instigated in the midst of the war, in 1941, as a smaller station (250 watts) that had to reinforce the broadcasting in the area. It was dependent on Radio Tirana.⁶⁴ (Figure 14, Figure 15). With the establishment of the socialist regime, the Radio stations were statalized.⁶⁵ The main radio station was Radio Tirana, the “voice” of the regime abroad and inside the country. Besides Korça, other stations had been instigated (Radio Shkodra, Radio Gjirokastra and Radio Kukësi), operating as its satellites. As the map of these cities shows, radio broadcasting appeared to be a “privilege” of border cities. All the abovementioned places were neuralgic thresholds between Albania and its neighbors.⁶⁶

Radio Korça aired for the first time in April 1941. Italian funding supplied the studio with a large amount of music discs that Vasil Dishnica⁶⁷ estimated to be around four hundred and consisted of Italian popular in-vogue musics of that period. Radio Korça did not own good recording devices so musicians were broadcast live until the mid 1960s. They were organized in different music ensembles and performed live according to a prepared schedule. A Newsreel (Zhurnal) from the year 1955 dedicated to the then 96 year old Spiro Konda⁶⁸ displays a *mandolinata* ensemble. It shows four musicians playing on

63. Muka 2008: 14

64. Vasil Dishnica. Personal Conversation. August 2012; December 2012. This initiative coincided with the Italo-Greek conflict (1940-1941).

65. The radio became a very popular medium in people’s interface with music. Its omnipresence was directly linked with the socialist system for a number of reasons. First of all, Radio was the only liable medium for music allocation and dissemination. The State Television programs were launched regularly from April 1970s but they did not have a large national coverage until 1985 (Overlock 1996: 106 – 107). It was also an affordable device for consumer use, owned by a large sector of the population. Finally, it concentrated studio recordings and the practical means to reproduce them. Consequently major activities and protagonists of popular music in Albania knotted their careers with radio institutions.

The insights provided here come from a research on Radio music history from the 1940s to the early 1990s. The targets were Radio Tirana and Radio Korça. The survey included programming schedules, archival investigations, and interviews with music editors (redaktorë muzike) and sound technicians.

66. A research and history of Radio and Media in Albania is yet to be done. There are very few journalistic attempts (Muka 2008) or broad overviews like that of Janis E. Overlock (1996: 106-107). These considerations have come out mostly from my own research. I owe very much to oral accounts and I am particularly thankful for that to Vasil Dishnica (Sound technician of Radio Korçë from 1941 to 1985), to Ardian Rapushi (Engineer Chief of broadcasting in Radio Korçë from 1996), to Raimonda Xhoga (sound technician in Radio Korçë from 1977), and Erifili Riza (sound technician in Radio Korçë between 1966-2000).

67. See Glossary.

68. “Nëpër Shqipëri”, Director Endri Keko, *Zhurnali no. 12*, 1955.
<http://www.aqshf.gov.al/arkiva-11-4.html?movie=1781>

guitars and mandolins. Similar to this group, Dishnica singularized *Sazet e Radios* (Radio's Saze), a Trio for classical music (piano, violin and clarinet). There were also two ensembles (a large one and a smaller one) for light music performances that counted nearly 19 singers and musicians.⁶⁹

Daily radio programs published in the local paper *Përpara* from the mid 1940s display a combination of music sections, radio journals, and propaganda segments. The music aired had various denominations such as "muzikë vallzimi" (dance music), "polka, waltz, tango", "classic music", or "music from operettas". To be included also "March Music", "Soviet Music", and "Partisan Music". Timings of these sections appear more or less equal, with each sections lasting between 15 to 25 minutes.

The most relevant aspect that should be noted is the connection with Radio Tirana. The latter interfered on Korça's broadcastings only for radio journals. Partially because its signal was not strong, this was a much reduced transmission timing compared to a decade later. From mid 1960s the daily program was split in two parts: from seven o' clock until midday Radio Tirana broadcast in the same frequency band, confining the official broadcast time of Radio Korça from 13:00 to 22:00.⁷⁰

Piecing these details with information provided by two of the eldest employers in the radio station (Vasil Dishnica and Pirro Katro), it can be observed that until the late 1950s, organization and broadcasting choices of the Radio were less centralized, although not autonomous. Live performances made the presence of local musicians much more integral to the daily program. In the successive years, the radio station was continuously supplied with recorded music products from Radio Tirana and with a carefully revised daily program from the propaganda sectors.

(accessed 3.1.2013). The Newsreels contained usually three or four reportages and were screened before the movie start. Spiro Konda (1862 – 1967) was a prominent Albanian philologist. He was also a well-known musician in Korçë. Accounts that he played in a *mandolinata* group date from 1908 (See Bello 2012: 33-34).

69. I am very thankful to Viktor Çani for his detailed diary and photographs; I am also thankful to Vaskë Kolaci for sharing with me his personal notes. The large ensemble that played live in radio performances had seven vocalists and 12 musicians consistent of guitars, accordion, clarinets, c. bass, trompe, violin, drums. The smaller ensemble consisted of piano, accordion, c. bass and violin.

70. In the mid 1980s, Radio Korçë airings ended at 9 pm.

'Lira' group and the Serenading Practices

With the establishment of the socialist system, the musical activities started channeling within the framework of institutionalization and statalization. This framework included also the repertoire of *Këngë Korçare* performed in the city up to the late 1940s. The outcome was a group of male singers and *mandolinata* players named *Lira*. This group functioned within the music activities organized by the House of Culture in Korçë. It had its own space for rehearsing within the building and became officially acclaimed as performer of the city's songs. *Lira* consecrated the ties with them in a sort of symbiosis: *Këngë Korçare* had been identified with this ensemble, in the same way that this ensemble came to be identified with *Këngë Korçare*.⁷¹

The repertoire that *Lira* group performed passed through historicizing lenses. It came to be regarded as referential of Korça's city's music (*muzikë qytetare*). Historicisation and the presentational format of *Lira* demarcated a sort of split with the active 'tradition' that was evolving in the city. The songs were still performed in different settings, but they had however a different status.

What should be noted at this point, is that the creative force that molded this (now historicized) repertoire in the first half of the twentieth century, did not stop with *Lira* and the 1950s. It continued to "absorb" musical experiences now located in the urban milieu: movie musicals, ballroom dances, light songs of that period, and radio music. Song making can be described as a local light music experience.

The pieces were not apartheid from regional and national light music. Yet, they were created and performed by local musicians and disseminated among local audiences. In this circumstance, new pieces were integrated in the repertoire of *Këngë Korçare* alongside the older ones. This was an outcome of agen-

71. Considering its prominence in the development of *Këngë Korçare* during the socialist system, I am going to discuss *Lira* group in a case-study (See Chapter Ten). Here I will limit the information to general description.

cies coming from young protagonists. Just like the previous generation of *Këngë Korçare* musicians, the latter as well left their imprint in the repertoire.⁷² Few historical recorded materials exist from this repertoire. Elder singers and musicians who were active in radio and stage performances insisted that they made many recordings, but apparently this quantity (if they were really recorded at all and not simply broadcast live) did not survive.⁷³

Lack of these sound traces was, in my opinion, not only due to the deficiency of good recording devices in Radio Korçë. It revealed also the state centralized framework of light music. Beginning in the 1960s, the latter channeled the music making towards specific activities. Among them, the most important one was the Festival of Light Song in Tiranë. The festival-model dominated the scene of light music from 1962 and on. The musicians and the audiences saw it as central for song making and popular dissemination. Its supremacy subdued in this way local music events to the festival logic.

The case below can be evocative for this aloof interest. Ligoraq Qano was a musician that used to sing with a group of friends. With the support of the then sound technician Vasil Dishnica, they managed to record some songs at the radio station.

I heard the guys singing at my window one night. When they finished, I asked if they were interested to be recorded in Radio Korça. And their answer was: "Well, this is why we came here and did you a *Serenata*, so that you can record us". At that time, the Radio did not have good recorders [1960 circa]. But they were heard pretty well so I started broadcasting them.⁷⁴

Eleven songs accompanied with two guitars have been recorded on this tape. The leading voice is Ligoraq Qano, the performer to whom the songs had been attributed. Vasil Dishnica narrated a part of this story in 1993, during a radio program. Then retired, he talked about his experiences at the radio

72. This is something I am going to explore more in detail in Part Four and Part Five.

73. This archive has lost many materials during the 1970s, when the Radio institution moved to a new building. During transportation many tapes and discs have been damaged. The second moment was during 1997. The armed uprisings of the year 1997 left the institution unguarded. The radio employers say that many materials were stolen. During my research (2010 – 2013) the now responsible Raimonda Xhoga confessed that a large quantity of materials, especially those in 78rpms and LP have been lost.

74. Transcribed from *Serenata Korçare-Programme*, Episode 3, Radio Korçë, 1993.

station and the difficulty in broadcasting these songs. For the case, shared also the recordings he had preserved (Figure 16). The songs were broadcast in the early 1960s in a program called *Muzikë e Kërkuar (Requested music)* but according to Dishnica only for a brief period.

The lack of recordings redirected my research towards alternative sources that could provide insights on the practice. Besides oral accounts, family photographs turned out to be the most valuable path. Most are photographs I collected from musicians. In this way, I was able to trace many different contexts where the practice took place: from what seems to be a live performance (Figure 17) at a wedding, to a casual street gathering (Figure 18); from a party celebration (Figure 19), to picnics outside (Figure 20). The musical instruments that prevail are the guitar and the accordion.

As for other consumerist technologies, the personal use of cameras and other multimedia was pretty scarce at the time and the number of photos people had was limited.⁷⁵ The photographs are in most cases a small size (9cm x 7cm) - the standard format produced by the statalized studio photographs - and are all in black and white. In most of the photos the protagonists have a standard pose-posture: they look at the camera that exerts an immobility effect on them. The only exception is that of the group outside (Figure 20), where the protagonists appear more relaxed and carefree, avoiding the direct contact with the camera focus and trying to be more unrestrained in their gestures and postures.

Këngë Korçare as a Latent Experience

In the 26th of June 1973 Enver Hoxha delivered a speech in the Fourth Plenum of Central Committee. The material was published successively in many different editions and represented one of the most notorious speeches. The title was: "Të thellojmë luftën ideologjike kundër shfaqjeve të huaja e

75. On photography see also De Rapper, Durand 2011.

qëndrimeve liberale ndaj tyre" (To deepen the ideological struggle against foreign expressions and the liberal attitudes towards them). The speech, revolved mainly on subject matters such as, the way of life (mënyra e jetesës), taste and attitudes (shije dhe sjellje), youth and their education (edukimi revolucionar i rinisë), and the framing of arts and literature in the aesthetic of socialist realism.⁷⁶

The speech was a verbalized account on the enactment of measures and campaigns related to the Cultural Revolution and the class war. It served to "make the point" once more on the 'two-front war': against 'imperialism' and 'modern revisionism' and on the development of what he imagined as an Albanian socialist culture in opposition to the "outside world". The estrangement of the 'foreigner' (e huaja) represented a category in opposite to the purism of the 'national', the 'Albanian'. There was a Manichean line between the Albanian and the 'non-Albanian'; between things that were 'foreign' and those that were 'ours' grouped as "body and familial metaphors"⁷⁷. In spite of this speech's notoriety, the enactment of the measures had begun much earlier. The case below illustrates the ones applied to 'foreign' music.

Although Jorgaq Nano was a student of music (1963-1968), summers he worked as an accordion player in taverns.

Our group consisted of a clarinet, guitar, accordion and drums. We played ballroom dances and few serenata melodies. During that time, one had to be careful not to play very rhythmic staff; mambo for example.⁷⁸

At a certain point, he recalls having received an official note from the Palace of Culture in which the musicians were advised not to play serenata or 'foreign' musics.

It was an official document. I was aware we could be under forms of surveillance, so for not being harmed, decided to carefully revise what we were playing. Not too many foreign songs; only those that were the most popular. Then

76. Hoxha 1980 [1973]: 320-395

77. Herzfeld 2005: 4

78. Jorgaq Nano. Personal Conversation. December 2012

not fast rhythms; mambo or rumba for example. This took place in the late 1960s, before my graduation.⁷⁹

During this period, the highest bureaucratic staff of the Palace of Culture became very active on Party performative lines. This involved not only the accomplishment of plans for the official cultural activities, but also the revision of leisure and public entertainment. Practice of live music and public ballroom dance came to an end. The musicians did not describe this as a drastic measure, but as a gradual process through which this kind of services came to be limited and without dance. Live orchestras were usually hired for “special event” celebrations, mostly weddings, or official festivities. One of the few to do this outside of this rule was hotel “Iliria”. Here an orchestra played for four hours in the weekends, just music.⁸⁰

What was being adjusted and put under control was the dimension of entertainment and leisure. The oral comments relied again on the “cyclical perception”⁸¹ indicating that this condition began when “Albania broke up with Russians”⁸² and that the constraints became especially restrictive in the 1970s. The most common comment about this situation goes to the top-down disposition and to the class war. There were also observations that commented this situation in economic terms: the events coincided with the extension of working schedules in factories⁸³ and with a decrease of incomes. Therefore such consumptions were not affordable on a day-to-day basis as before. Each of these comments is complementary to the other. I would add also an ever-increasing self-censorship that people adopted for not being too exposed to the high level of politicking in society’s life.⁸⁴

79. Jorgaq Nano. Personal Conversation. December 2012.

80. Likely a point of contact with the outside world for those few non-Albanian visitors, it had to present a “different” image to the visitors.

81. Connerton 1989: 20

82. This expression describes the break of any official relationships between the Soviet Union and the Albanian country. See also Chapter Two, p. 34.

83. The fabrics worked in three operating schedules (*tre turne*).

84. The self-censorship and generally the situation of this period should count also the measures that the regime undertook against “his enemies”. A peak of this situation in Korçë was in the mid 1970s when a very harsh campaign of arrests and deportations followed what people called the “slogans’ event”. A number of slogans against Enver Hoxha were written. This caused a sort of “witch hunting” for a number intellectuals and their families. Among them there

The impact of these measures brought changes and looking at the outcomes, it is not hard to identify the targets. Ballroom danced music was one of them, street singing was the other. The latter became a matter of public order and police surveillance.

We were singing near hotel *Borova*. There were two guys on guitar, one on the accordion and the singer. It was after midnight, but people passing by heard and joined in. The policeman saw the group and approached. Nothing really bad happened. We passed the night at the police.⁸⁵

The above-mentioned case took place in the mid 1960s. Going a little forward in time, Ilir Dishnica (b. 1958) comments on a similar case:

It was my first year in high school. A girl friend of mine celebrated her birthday and we gathered in the “Cabinet of Marxism – Leninism”⁸⁶ with an electric guitar. For plugging it in, we had to remove some of the signboards⁸⁷ but once done celebrating, we forgot to put them again in their place. As a consequence I was expelled and attended a part-time high school.⁸⁸

“*Serenatista* hunting” produced continuous disputes between police and musicians. Every musician I interviewed had his own story to tell. The main target seemed to be the outdoor events and those that contended more these dimensions were the youngest generations.

A stimulating conversation with protagonists from this period was the one with Genci Kadilli (b. 1962) and Ilir Dishnica. In the mid 1970s they were known as *Djemtë e bonbonerisë* (Guys of the Candy Shop). They were self-taught musicians. Played on the guitar and sang in youth celebrations like birthdays, parties, or get-togethers. But the locale with which Korçarë identified them the most was the terrace of this palace known for the candy shop. Playing constantly there identified them as “Guys of the Candy Shop”.

were locally known musicians and artists that ended their lives in the communist prisons. An interesting fact is that the deportations, arrests, and trails tended to be public so that people could assist in what was happening.

85. Transcribed from *Serenata Korçare-Programme*, Episode 2, Radio Korçë 1993.

86. “Cabinet” meant a classroom where the students attended the lessons on Marxism-Leninism.

87. He is speaking about slogans or placards containing Marxist-Leninist phrases, or dictums that were prepared for being hung somewhere.

88. Ilir Dishnica. Personal Conversation. August 2012.

The first observations that came out from our conversation concerned the music content of this event. *Djemtë e Bonbonerisë* operated on the idea of gathering to sing and singing to socialize.

We did not pretend that everyone sung perfectly pitched; like professional musicians or as *parè* did once. The important thing was to be together; learn songs from each other; serenade when it came to girlfriends, and sing on our own. They were love songs, longing.⁸⁹

Groups' consistency shared many elements in common with *parè* experience: male performers, outdoor playing, and serenading. They had learned some of the songs from their parents or elder people⁹⁰, evoking in this way an familiar model of music-making.

The second observation pertains to the setting where such events took place. The covert status imposed a search for place that could be reliable for an outdoor performance, but covert at the same time. Such places consequently acquired a symbolic value for the performers while indicating at the same time acts of resistance and insubordination:

The terrace worked well. We used to play almost every day. It was up, and had two exits, which made easier to leave when the police approached. It was our preferential meeting point. Another place where we found ourselves singing was a refuge shelter [vendstrehim].⁹¹

Partly because of the regime policies, and partly because of the self-contained attitudes and care, the physical and symbolic place for serenading and singing endorsed a latent condition. Smaller unit activities and get-together formats acquired a significant space. In a conversation with Lirika Bicolli⁹², she confessed that her husband, herself, and a few close friends spent many evenings singing with a guitar at home.⁹³ She described this as a form of amusement after work that enlivened their free time. Other protagonists share

89. Genci Kadilli. Personal Conversation. August 2012

90. These were also the ones they recorded for the *Serenata Korçare -Programme*, in 1993.

91. Genci Kadilli and Ilir Dishnica. Personal Conversation. August 2012. The refuge (vendstrehim) were underground air-raid shelters constructed during the communist regime. They had the same function as bunkers. Were constructed inside the city's quarters, with the idea that people could reach them in proximity of any attack.

92. Lirika Bicolli (b. 1945) is the wife of Thanas Bicolli (1938-2001). Personal conversation. August-September 2012.

93. Thanas Bicolli recorded four songs for the Radio program. (See Appendix I. Episode 2 of *Serenata Korçare-Programme*)

this comment as well. In each case, what they described were intimate settings: youth classmates' parties, (*mbrëmje rinore*), or simply get-together initiatives that took place in self-organized formats but not in public spaces. Those that prevailed were home contexts. The strengthening ties with "smaller universes of urban life"⁹⁴ such as the family, the close friends, the neighborhood group evidence the importance of these entities in the social production of meaning. While the songs enlivened these set-ups, these entities contributed in preserving and disseminating the songs.

Therefore, it can be said that *Këngë Korçare* combined local forms of music-making and transmission – *parë* or *mbledhkë* formats, domestic or outdoor settings, learn by heart and by ear processes of dissemination; amateur agencies, and offstage performance - with national, interregional and transnational musicking⁹⁵ formats - recorded or broadcast mass mediated music, cinema, dance, onstage performances. The Latin Mediterranean geographies and the Italian light music are eminent, though "flowing" in some cases from the Soviet "East". What has to be pointed out is that Korçarë articulated a format of music-making that had presentational character but whose anchoring in place engaged largely in participatory models.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Hannerz 1980: 261

⁹⁵ Small 1998

⁹⁶ For *presentational* and *participatory* forms of music making see Turino 2008: 23-65

Chapter 5

Urban Folklore, *Saze*, and *Këngë Korçare*

During the communist regime the research energies and the projects of the state institutionalized culture were concentrated on rural music settings. This was due to their imagined “authenticity” as sites of “genuine” Albanian expressive culture.¹ Folk music retained the most privileged part. It was conceived as presentational performance. Emblematic for this was *Festivali Folklorik i Gjirokastrës (Folkloric Festival of Gjirokastrë)*, instigated in the year 1968.² This big competitive manifestation of folk music was organized every five years and a whole staff machine of musicians, ethnographers, writers, journalists and apparatchicks worked for the organization and the promotion of this event. A platform elaborated by a commission provided a structural index of subject matters that each group had to follow. The stage performances were then recorded, documented and disseminated through radio and television.³

1. Ballgjati In Press. See also Stokes 1994: 6-15

2. Folk Festivals in Albania date prior to this date but starting from this year a systematic organization of every five years was established. The city of Gjirokastrë (birthplace of Enver Hoxha) became the official place. Xhangolli 2008: 664-665.

3. I am thankful to Josif Minga and Afërdia Onuzi for the informations given on this event.

This politic reached an extreme alienation with the so-called *Folklori i Ri* (New Folklore) propagated from the 1970s. The newness of it included especially a repertoire derived from folk or traditional music idioms that could render the socialist “reality” through strongly politicized lyrics.⁴ *Folklori i Ri* altered the modes of existence of traditional music practices, creating a national and ethnic-oriented presentational music with “folk” ascendancy: the *popullore* music.

The outcomes of this situation are in my opinion very complex and still a matter for research. Music belonged to the masses according to the Albanian history of music⁵ but “properly speaking, there are no masses, only ways of viewing people as masses.”⁶ Furthermore, when it comes to music production things depend not only on what is heard, but how it is heard.⁷ This background is necessary when it comes to consider traditional musical practices in Albania because the folklore politic imposed study methods and conceptions of musical performance that have prevailed in Albanian music. At the same time, it elucidates the aloof interest for musical practices taking place in urban conditions in comparison to the rural ones.⁸

In this chapter, I would like to proceed by drawing a comparative line between *Këngë Korçare* and other dominant musical practice in the city. The most important are *Saze* music renditions. *Këngë Korçare* and *Saze* performances have been studied through separate approaches, in which traditional and non-traditional status distinctions have been applied.⁹ I would acknowledge a certain truth on that: *Këngë Korçare* have chordal and functional harmonies, in which the pitch contour is articulated according to a tonal scale. *Saze* performers accompany folk or traditional songs that have modal qualities. The performances present bourdon-based harmonies and/or “modal harmonies”¹⁰.

4. For insights on the *Folklori i Ri* see Tole 1998: 142-146; Sugarman 2000: 1000

5. Historia e Muzikës Shqiptare 1984: 118

6. Manuel 1988: 12

7. Middleton 1990: 188

8. Ballgjati In Press

9. Tole 1998; Koço 2004: 67-73

10. Peter Manuel (1989: 70) identifies as “modal harmony” the combination between elements of “modal polyphony” and “chordal harmony”.

Lastly, *Saze* performances entered in the *popullore* category while *Këngë Korçare* did not.

In the approach presented here, both musical experiences are not considered as separate but as functioning within the condition of urbanity. My aim is to move away from the idea that takes the urban as given and trace their histories as related to places of making and thinking about music in the city. Each of these musical experiences embodied confluence between Ottoman legacies, Western European culture and local music. Here they are considered as “units of investigation”¹¹ that had a life in place. A look at these units reveals how ideas on the collective, the traditional, the folklore, and the popular can be negotiated in the city’s music-historical settings as interplay between processes of “continuity and communality”¹² and variance and mutability.

‘Saze’ performers

The combination of musical instruments known as *Saze* appears throughout the entire area of south Albania and Northern Greece.¹³ A historical referential “model for such groups was the *ince saz* (fine orchestra), a late Ottoman urban Rom ensemble [...] that popularized Rom renditions of court repertory, folk and popular genres.”¹⁴ Therefore, considering *Saze* performances in Korça does not imply that they represented something distinct from other groups that have performed in the area. I am not discussing *Saze of Korça*, rather than

11. Reyes Schramm 1982: 5-6

12. Middleton 1990: 132. My Italics

13. See Loli 2003; Tole 1998. Function, practice and historical evolution of an ensemble like *Saze* shares many elements in common with *čalgija* bands, *tamburica* and many other locally verbalized ensembles. They seem to share a common aesthetic in their performance, in the intercourse between local, regional and national-oriented strategies. *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music, vol. 8: Europe* (Rice, Porter, Goertzen 2000) can provide a general comparative view of the multifarious “lives” of these ensembles, their diverse and similar traits. Jane Sugarman makes a stimulating comparative approach on the way these local geographies have influenced formation and spread of such ensembles in different Albanian regions. See Jane Sugarman, “Albania II: Traditional Music” in George Leotsakos and Jane Sugarman. “Albania.” *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.pros.lib.unimi.it/subscriber/article/grove/music/40650> (accessed 27 February 2013). Also Sugarman 2000: 993-1000

14. Buchanan 2006: 116

Saze in Korça¹⁵ putting the emphasis in the participation and engagement of these local musicians in social life.

Saze performers, according to Vasil Ballauri, were initially hired from neighboring areas. The first musicians had been settled from the late nineteenth century, a time corresponding with the city's economic growth. With time, he pointed out, Korçarë Muslims and Christians learned to play and created their own groups.¹⁶ Non-Gyptians played in these ensembles, but the Gyptian element - both Christian and Muslim - were dominant. The most common settings where they played had been the weddings, the bars, and inns situated especially in the market place area.

These musicians had humble origins. They came from lower urban classes and had self-taught musical knowledge. They did not enjoy a respectful social status. Family lineages played an important role in the historical development of this music.¹⁷ Among the most distinguished in Korçë can be cited the *Hajro* family and *Xheli* family (Figure 21).

The groups functioned around the figure of a leader. The role of master-musicians was fundamental in the internal organization of the group and also in the interest for hiring them. Those who appear most commonly performing among local consumers from that period up to the early 1990s, are listed here¹⁸:

Saze	Years Active
Sazet of Jonuz Korça	mid 1900s - 1940s
Ciloja me shokët (Ciloja and friends)	mid 1900s -1940s
Saze "Demka & Hajro"	1930s – 1950s

15. In the recordings available from these groups (1930s up to the 1980s) the most consistent instruments are the kaval (*fyell*), clarinet (*gërnëtë*), lauto (*llauta*), violin, baglama (*bakllama*), and framed drum (*dajre*)/drums.

16. Ballauri 2003: 19-20. In his study, Vasil Tole noted that initially the groups were scarce. They moved from one place to another or as part of Ottoman courts. They have been settled as town or city *Saze* musicians from late 19th century (Tole 1998: 52-53). Tole has continuously referred to many *Saze* musicians from Korçë, which leads to assume that these groups were particularly active in the city due to urbanism and job possibilities the city offered.

17. See Tole 1998: 49-50; Loli 2003: 86-96

18. I am thankful to Josif Minga and Vasil Tole for their information. The list is also grounded on recordings and performances these groups made from the 1930s and on.

Saze of Sherif Çobani	1940s – 1970s
Llaqi me shokët (Llaqi and friends)	1930s– 1970s
Sazet of Xheli family	1950s – 1980s
Sazet of Lulushi)	1970s – 1990 ¹⁹

Beginning in the 1950s, the renditions of these musicians became largely associated with onstage, presentational music. The ensemble passed through the filters of institutionalization. Labeled also as *orkestrina popullore* (*popullore* orchestra), a rich presentational repertoire evolved and was popularized by onstage performances, radio and television broadcasts. These performances molded an imagery of the group that existed alongside its day-to-day activities. If the former obeyed to the aesthetic of folklorisation the latter experiences were more flexible, either in the music performed – mingling with western-European idioms - or in the instruments - including the guitar, accordion, and drums. The clarinet-player retained however the most privileged leader part.²⁰

The protagonists of these performances can be described as musicians that operated in

heterogeneous cultural settings, shaping their craft based on tradition and on personal creative ability as well as on improvisation techniques (although strictly controlled in their internal organization by well-defined stylistic codes).²¹

At the same time, they negotiated, shaped and re-shaped their interactional modes with the music they played and the situated activities: from ‘traditional’ occasions such as the weddings, to non-‘traditional’ ones: live performances and the ones mediated through radio and recordings. *Saze* renderings bore,

19. Nevruz Nure known largely as *Lulushi* was the leading clarinetist. He passed away in 1990. See Glossary.

20. Among the most renowned performers are: Vasil Xhezmaxhi, known as *Cilo Qorri* (1887-1953), playing on kaval, bouzouki and clarinet; Kiço Poda on kaval, (1889-1982), Hajro Hajro (1879-1943), Abedin Hajro on violin (1904-1967), Sulejman Bakllamaja on baglama (1885-1952), Skënder Xheli, alias *Keno* (1920-1996) in *gërnetë*; Novruz Nure (1954-1990), alias *Lulushi* in *gërnetë*, Sherif Çobani singer (1919-1993). The most prominent female artist was Qerime Bakiu (1898? -1968), known for singing and playing *dajre* (framed drum). A female voice, Eli Fara (b.1967), came to prominence in the early 1980s. She is a singer who constructed her career as a *popullore* artist starting from her concert performances with this ensemble.

21. "musicisti, cioè, che operano in situazioni culturali composite e che fondano il loro mestiere sulla tradizione, sull'abilità creativa personale, nonché sulle tecniche di improvvisazione (pur se rigorosamente controllate all'interno di codici stilistici ben precisi). In De Simone 1983: 5

just like *Këngë Korçare* “the hallmarks of urban life.”²² They prompted the development of modern urban popular styles from ‘traditional’ backgrounds.

Urban Folklore Practice

Richard Middleton points out that processes of “continuity and communality” are inherent to “any musical practice”. Based on this assumption, he suggests that the relation between rural and urban cultures can not be considered as a simple transition.²³ Both *Saze* musicians and *Këngë Korçare* performers carry on the interconnection between the urban and the rural, which is, in my opinion, a peculiarity in Korçë’s musical culture. The composer Kristo Kono, for example, narrated in his memoirs that the first instrument on which he used to play music was the kaval (*fyell*) and that once he started his (western oriented) music studies he switched for a clarinet.²⁴ The kaval can be described as an in-use instrument for musicking in every day practices and in *Saze* renditions.²⁵

Singing experiences can provide a further example on the dynamics of continuity and variability. They show the transformation that occurs when a musical practice inherent to an orthogenetic type of culture entwines with heterogenetic elements. Urban folklore and the expressive formats of multipart polyphonic singing had many combinatory potentialities with *Saze* performances and *Këngë Korçare*. At best, these potentialities appeared in the former case, where rural memes of multipart singing, two or three-part ones were rendered by the instrumental accompaniment in a format in which the group became an instrumental equivalent of the vocal model while the singer/s emerged as prominent soloist/s.²⁶

22. Reyes Schramm 1982: 9. My Italics

23. Middleton 1990: 132

24. Kono [Unpublished typewritten manuscript: 3-6].

25. Ballauri (2003: 19) comments that the most common instruments elder used were bouzouki, dayreh and kaval. The *Saze* virtuoso master Vasil Çezmaxhi (Cilo Qorri) came into prominence through his kaval playing, although he also played the bouzouki and the clarinet (Tole 1998: 104). However, the latter prevailed.

26. This equivalence of instrumental accompaniment becomes more evident in the recordings of the 1970s – 1980s.

The same context stimulated in my opinion, a different type of agency: the one involving western-trained lyric singers that entered in possession of melodic lines of these urban folk songs and shaped them in an operatic singing style.²⁷ These appropriation modes were promoted by the recording industry. It would be reductive to see these examples as simple transition instances, in which western-tonal harmonies and a clear vocal sound are being introduced; or to regard *Saze* renditions simply as promoting urbanization of rural music. These processes highlight the continuity and communality of music practices, encouraging variances and innovations, and so articulating class, group, and national identities.²⁸ At best this negotiation of music practice shows the elusive character of categories such as folk, popular, light, and how the boundaries shifted continuously within the urban condition.

During fieldwork I collected many descriptive accounts that indicated co-existence between singing *Këngë Korçare* and forms of Tosk multipart folk songs.

My mother sung many *Këngë Korçare*; when she was alone at home, she used to sing and knew many songs; love songs the most. I listened to her and learned. My father then, used to sing at the weddings. He was from Përmeti²⁹ and musicians that played at weddings used to call him, because they liked his voice. He sang popular songs, (*këngë popullore*), folk songs, this kind of repertoire.³⁰

This is a description by Ilia Vinjau³¹ an active musician and author of *Këngë Korçare*. Similar descriptions like the one of Ilia Vinjau surfaced in other conversations. The singer Jorgjeta Lalazi pointed out that her mother used to sing folk songs she successively learned, while her father and uncle performed the urban “modern” repertoire. She supplied me not only with the descriptive

27. See Koço 2004. Significant for this discussion are also transcriptions of the songs *Lyra Shqiptare* that collected by Pjetër Dungu (Dungu 1940) in urban settings.

28. Middleton 1990: 132

29. Përmeti is a city in southeastern Albania. The most active locations for *Saze* musicians are to be found in the geographical pathway that goes through Përmeti – Leskovik – Korçë, which was also one of the most trafficked routes of migration.

30. Ilia Vinjau. Personal Conversation. August 2012. For him see also Glossary.

31. See Glossary.

dimension, but also with musical feedback, singing a few songs she learned from her mother.

The case that made me carefully consider the historical role of domestic performances was an episode from my research. Together with Nicola Scaldaferrri we were involved in a recording project dedicated to the singer Spanja Pipa (b.1938). Alongside, we did also a few other recordings in domestic contexts with Pandora Ndoni (age 78).³² The fact that she performed some pieces for us displayed that although oral histories of both old men and women mentioned the practice, those that had “preserved” the concrete sound event and were able to perform it were the women. On the other hand, this suggested that the males “introduced” the songs to their homes. As the case here showed, they did not import it onto a blank setting but “entered” in one where a singing practice was already existent. *Këngë Korçare* intermingled with practices of folk tunes until they came to substitute them.

The “outdoor” dynamics have instigated as well similar transformative dynamics. One account is Dhimitër Fundo about Themistokli Gërmenji square gatherings and its singing practices.³³ Yet, more stimulating for the transformative qualities is, in my suggestion, this note from Fori Tërpini

It was the end of a love story inspired by *Serenata Korçare* [practice]. At the wedding celebration, that was held in *Panda* [...], we were the protagonists; those that played the main role in the entertainment; with guitar, mandolins and love songs (without *Saze*). This has never happened before.³⁴

None of the two music practices that Fori Tërpini mentioned here is related to the ritual context of the wedding ceremony. The most significant aspect of this expressive activity is the interactive dimension, the entertainment (*argëtim*) in which a shared meaning is being produced through continuous

32. Pandora Ndoni was born in Borova, a village near Kolonjë and moved to Korçë in 1955, when she got married. She confessed to have learned to sing in her birthplace and that once in the city she performed some of them together with her husband. For turning the attention towards singing components of domestic settings, I am thankful to Nicola Scaldaferrri suggestions.

33. See Chapter Four, pp. 59-60.

34. “Kështu përfundoi kjo dashur e pastër e serenadave korçare. Në mbrëmjen e dasmës që u bë në kafenenë e Pandës [...] peshën e argëtimit e mbajtëm ne [...], me kitara, mandolina dhe këngë dashurie (pa saze) që nuk ishte bërë ndonjëherë.” (Tërpini 2003: 85) Standing to the details in his description and to the age of protagonists, it can be estimated that the event he is describing took place in the late 1930s.

intermingling of presentational and participatory formats. What Tërpini pointed out here was that if a certain form of music-making (*Saze* performance in this case) held the major part in conveying this meaning, at this moment a shift had taken place and an additional form of musicking made sense too. Fori Tërpini's comment deserves special attention because it

[s]uggests that musical performance is not so much an 'expressive form' that evokes a world of meanings located in other realms of experience, as it is a form of representation that participates fundamentally in constituting those worlds. It suggests that performance forms [emerge] as structured by a range of shared meanings, and as structuring, in their capacity to shape ongoing social formations.³⁵

The "social effect" made *Këngë Korçare* an anchored, active practice "nurtured" by the combination of participatory and orthogenetic elements, with presentational heterogenetic ones. In this discussion can be located a very common "tradition" in "special events" when, at a certain point the orchestra (*Saze*) stops playing and participants at the event start singing *Këngë Korçare*. Korçarë conceived of singing practices as an expressive behavior. Looking at the consistency, it can be said that this type of song turned out to be a significant index of expressive city's culture either on a personal and discreet level or in the group and the collective one.

35. Sugarman 1997: 27

Chapter 6

“Serenata Korçare” Programme, the Revival, and Radio Korça

In October 1993 Radio Korça aired a programme called *Serenata Korçare*. Six episodes of nearly an hour and a half each were broadcast every Saturday afternoon (See Appendix I). Most of the songs were recorded and broadcast for the first time. Once the programme had finished its series, the authors selected songs and mastered four audiocassettes containing 64 pieces in total. The set had a limited number and was sold exclusively by Radio Korça. My research on *Këngë Korçare* started from these cassettes. As one of the few documented recordings I possessed, my attention was absorbed in the tapes that I successively digitalized.

These materials were, or seemed to be the most important source I had to work with. My attention had somehow shifted from the radio programme itself, which at that moment I did not encompass within any research scopes. A personal conversation with one of the authors of this program, Grigor Çani, then director of the radio phonographic library and music editor (redaktor muzike) at the Department of Music in Radio Korça made me more carefully consider the case. He asserted that the radio programme was recorded and

that all the materials were in the archive. He commented also on many pertinent details on the initiative and its outcomes. Thanks to the patience of Raimonda Xhoga and Adrian Rrapushi, I could listen to and transcribe the twelve reel tapes BASF LGR 50 containing the six episodes (See Appendix I). The information provided from this radio programme brought to surface many attention-grabbing aspects that had to be contextualized, starting with the radio station's history.

The most important periods in Radio Korça history can be divided into three periods: the first lasted up to the 1990s and was distinguished from the centralized state coordination, fulfilling basically propaganda purposes and supervised programs. The dominant technology of reproduction was reel tape. Up to the late 1990s, one assists to a transitive moment in which this state institution was reconfigured to be adapted to the free market system. The institution underwent a series of initiatives in broadcasting programmes and technological improvements, including the construction of a local television channel. This period refashioned the public role of this media institution within the region. Although the dependency from Radio Tirana persisted, its regional role was more efficient, this from the point of view of my experience as a listener and employer. From the 2000s private radio stations emerged. In this new reality, Radio Korça broadcast were reduced drastically to mostly DJ music and very few aired programmes.¹ Digital technologies have completely substituted magnetic tapes and the once broadcasting studios were turned into a depot for unused material. I listened to the tapes in one of these depots and the idea I had on the programme was that it was created and aired during a turning point in Radio Korça history. This necessitated a rather transversal analysis.

1. There are no reports in Albania about radio-listening shares in local context. From my personal experience in Radio Korçë as a journalist and author (1998 – 2001), its programming from the 2000s and on seems drastically reduced compared to the emerging private radios.

Music at the Radio up to the 1990s

Before the 1990s music was allocated primarily through radio broadcasting. The recorded product was a radio product whose dissemination was not related to consumerist laws. An Albanian music industry was almost non-existent as sound recording and reproduction technologies were limited. Excluding few vinyl and LPs sold usually to tourists and to those still few that could afford them, music aficionados had little access to sound recordings and sound reproduction devices. In the absence of marketing and commodification absence, what was 'consumed' by the audiences was the aired music product.

Korçarë and Albanians in general shaped themselves as aired music consumers. The aesthetic of radio music attracted audiences, molded tastes, and at the same time attributed to this media a privileged role. This preferentiality explains the reasons why the youngsters "serenaded" to the radio technician.² They saw him as the possible intermediary between their music and the possibilities for its reproduction and dissemination.

Radio music broadcasts were estranged from the relationship with listeners. It was an indirect consumerism.³ The latter tastes did not influence broadcasting choices and the formats it aired did not aim to establish interactive contacts based on listeners preferences. The listener mattered little or nothing. People perceived this music as given, while forms of subversive type of listening did not lack. Hearing non-Albanian radio stations, mostly Greek, Italian, and Yugoslavian remained an attractive experience.

Radio Korçë had a great coverage in music, as the program schedule published in the local newspaper shows. This coverage made the station a reproducer that interceded to the audiences what the propaganda and the regime apparatchiks thought appropriate for airing. I have sketched out four day

2. See Chapter Three.

3. Manuel 1988: 5

programs published in the daily paper.⁴ So this is what Radio Korçë broadcasted on:

Saturday, May 6, 1967⁵

13:00	Sazet e Radios [Radio's <i>Saze</i>]
13:30	Lajmet [News]
13:40	Këndojnë Mihallaq Zallëmi dhe Ilo Evro [Broadcasting with the singers Mihallaq Zallëmi dhe Ilo Evro]
14:00	Lidhje me Radio Tiranën [Connection with Radio Tirana]
17:00	Jetë e Gaz na Dha Partia – Program Vokal [Life and Joy gave us the Party - Vocal Music Program]
18:00	Nëpër faqet e shtypit tone [Day Press]
18:10	Këndojnë Luçie Miloti dhe Bik Ndoja [Broadcasting with the Singers Luçie Miloti and Bik Ndoja]
18:30	Rubrika Kulture [Culture Column]
18:40	Këndojnë Solistët e Qytetit Tonë [Broadcasting with Singers from our City]
19:00	Koncerti Ynë i Preferuar [Our Favorite Concert]
19:30	Lajmet dhe Programi i Emisioneve [News and Broadcasting Program]
19:40	Këndon Grupi Lab [The <i>Lab</i> Group Sings]
20:00	Lidhje me Radio Tiranën [Connection with Radio Tirana]
20:40	Muzikë Vallzimi [Dance Music]
22:00	Mbyllja e Programit [End of the Broadcasting Program]

The titles display a constant alternation between music and short bulletins. In nine hours of broadcasting, Radio Tirana interposed almost four hours with its broadcasting, while nearly four hours and a half were aired music. The “made in Albania” music product dominated, and if we were to make a categorization it can be said that there was a combination between categories con-

4. I chose them in flexible way. In doing this I have been persuaded by the idea that it would be more stimulating to pick a date and a year, rather than reading each one of them and select those that I could find as more significant.

5. Përpara, 6 May 1967: 4

tending folk and *popullore* music and repertoire of light music (*këngë e lehtë*)⁶. Referring to what a Korçar could listen on August 18, 1975 it seems that aired music does not go through any change, but becomes even more “Albanian. The sections are denser than the previous example, while titles like “Rini e aksioneve” or “Kore pionerësh” suggest domination of socialist models.

Here is what it broadcasted on:

Monday, August 18, 1975 (*Përpara* 16 August 1975: 4)

13:00	Çelja e Emisioneve të Mesditës [Opening Titles]
13:01	Këngëtarë dhe Instrumentistë Popullorë [<i>Popullore</i> Singers and Musicians]
13:30	Lajmet [News]
13:40	<i>Rini e Aksioneve</i> – Program Vokal] [<i>Youth of Actions</i> ⁷ – Vocal Music]
14 –14:45	Lidhje me Radio Tiranën [Connection with Radio Tirana]
17:00	Çelja e Emisioneve të Mbrëmjes [Opening Titles, Evening Program]
17:01	Disa Minuta me Këngëtarin Zija Saraçi [Few Minutes with the Singer Zija Saraçi]
17:10	Nëpër Faqet e Librit [Book readings]
17:30	Ngjarjet nëpër Botë [News from the World]
17:40	Nga Kënga në Këngë [From Song to Song]
18:00	Nëpër Faqet e Shtypit [Reading Day Press]
18:10	Ekzekuton Orkestra Frymore e Korçës [Performance of Korçë’s Brass Band]
18:30	Emision për Fëmijët [Children’s Program]
18:45	Kore Pionerësh [Pioneer Choirs]
19:00	Koncerti i Preferuar [Our Favorite Concert]
19:30	Lajmet dhe Programi i Emisioneve [News and Broadcasting Program]

6. To them should also be added pieces of art music from Albanian composers and a few ‘popular’ titles from western European classic and romantic composers.

7. ‘Aksion’ meant the recruitment of youth for voluntary work in state projects such as building the railway or agrarian works.

- 19:45 Program me Valle Popullore nga Krahina të Jugut
[Program with *Popullore* Dances from Southern Regions]
- 20:00 Lidhje me Radio Tiranën [Connection with Radio Tirana]
- 20:30-22:00 *Pak nga të Gjitha*. Program Muzikor
[*A little from everything*. Music Program]

In the 1980s, the models remained the same. Feedback from journalists and technicians displayed that the aired materials were previously recorded and then broadcast. These two last illustrations date to this period and reveal once more the status–quo of broadcasting parameters⁸.

Thursday, 26 February 1981 (*Përpara*, 25 February 1981: 4)

- 13:00 Hapja e Emisioneve dhe Programi i Ditës
[Opening Titles and Day Broadcasting Program]
- 13:01 Koncert me Këngë Popullore të Përpunuara
[Concert with Newly Arranged *Popullore* Songs]
- 13:30 Lajmet dhe Rubrika “Të Njihemi me Arritjet e Rretheve të Tjera”
[News and the Column “To Acquaint Achievements of the Other Districts”]
- 13:45 Këndojnë Rakipe Karraj dhe Gjergji Suljoti
[Broadcasting with Singers Rakipe Karraj and Gjergji Suljoti]
- 14:00 Rubrika Ekonomike (ritransmetim)
[Economy Column – re-broadcasted]
- 14:15 Këngë të Ditëve Tona
[Songs of Our Nowadays]
- 14:30 – 45 Lidhje me Radio Tiranën [Connection with Radio Tirana]
- 17:00 Hapje e Emisioneve dhe Programi
Opening Titles and Day Broadcasting Program]
- 17:01 *Fole Shqiponjash*. Program me Muzikë Popullore
[*Eagles’ Nest* – Program with *Popullore* Music]
- 17:20 Njëpër Faqet e Librit “Një nga Rrugët e Jetës”
Tregim nga Kiço Blushi. Pjesa e dytë
[Readings from the Book “One of the ways of life” Novel from

8. Raimonda Xhoga (Sound Technician and Broadcasting Responsible in Radio Korçë). Personal Conversation. March 2012; August 2012).

Këngë Korçare: Song Making and Musical Culture in the city of Korça

- Kiço Blushi. Second Part]
- 17:40 Nga Kënga në Këngë [From Song to Song]
- 18:00 Njëpër Faqet e Shtypit [Reading Day Press]
- 18:15 Nga Krijimtaria Muzikore e Kompozitorit Limoz Dizdari
[Music pieces by the Composer Limoz Dizdari]
- 18:30 *Përvojë, Teknikë, Shkencë* [Experience, Technic, Science]
- 18:45 Koncert i Ansambllit të Ushtrisë Popullore
[Concert of the *Popullore* Army Ensemble]
- 19:00 Emision për Rininë. Rritim më tej Përvojën e Përgatitjes Politike
Luftarake me të Rinjtë e Repartit “N”
[Program for the Youth. To Grow Further the Experience of Political and War Training with the Youngsters of “N” Unit]
- 19:15 *E Qeshur si Rinia*. Program me Këngë
[Happy like the Youth. Program with Songs]
- 19:30 Emisioni i Lajmeve [News]
- 19:50 Këngë Partizane [Partisan Songs]
- 20:00 [Lidhje me Radio Tiranën [Connection with Radio Tirana]
- 20:30 Program me Muzikë sipas Kërkesave të Dëgjuesve
[Music chosen from Listeners Requests]
- 20:50 Lajmet [News]

Wednesday, November 2, 1988 (*Përpara*, 2 November 1988: 4)

- 13:00 Hapja e Emisioneve dhe Programi
[Opening Titles and Broadcasting Program]
- 13:01 *Pak nga të Gjitha*. Program Muzikor
[A little from Everything. Music Program]
- 13:30 Lajmet [News]
- 13:45 Vazhdon Programi “Pak nga të Gjitha”
[To be Continued. “A little from Everything”]
- 14:00 Fatosat dhe Pionerët Diskutojnë rreth Librave dhe Revistave të Tyre. Shfletojmë Revistën “Pioneri”. [*Fatos*⁹ and Pioneers Discuss about their Books and Magazines. Reading the Magazine “Pioneri”]

9. Indicated the most brilliant children in primary school.

14:15	Pjesë nga Muzika për Fëmijë [Children's Music]
14:30	<i>Për ju Pushues</i> . Program Muzikor [For you Vacationists. Music Program]
15:00	Mbyllja e Emisioneve të Mesditës [End of the Midday Programs]
17:00	Hapja e Emisioneve dhe Programi [Opening Titles and Broadcasting Program]
17:01	Lajmet [News]
17:15	Këndojnë Solistët Pogradecarë [Program with singers from Pogradec]
17:20	Shfletojmë Librin e Ri <i>Eklips</i> nga Zija Çela [Readings from the New Book of Zija Çela <i>Eclips</i>]
17:30	Inçizime nga Festivali Folklorik i Gjirokastrës. Koncert i rrethit të Gjirokastrës. [Recordings from Gjirokastrë Folk Festival. Concert from Gjirokastrë District]
18:00	Shfletojmë Gazetën <i>Përpara</i> [Readings of <i>Përpara</i> paper]
18:15	Interpretojnë Artistët tanë Lirike [Broadcasting with Our Lyric Singers]
18:30	Jehona e Shqipërisë Socialiste në Radio [Echo of Socialist Albania at the Radio]
18:45	<i>Këngë për Jetën e Re</i> . Duke pritur kongresin e 6-të të kooperativave Bujqësore. [Songs for the New Life. Expecting the 6 th Congress of Agricultural Cooperatives]
19:15	Muzikë nga Filmat Tanë. [Music from Our Films]
19:30	Emisioni i Lajmeve [News]
19:50	Melodi Orkestrale [Orchestra Music]
20:00	Mbyllja e Emisioneve të Ditës [End of Day Broadcasting]

A department that was one of the main administrative divisions within the institution supervised the overwhelming music presence. It covered music broadcasting necessities and was known as *Redaksia e Muzikës* (Music Editorial Department)¹⁰. *Redaktor muzike* (Music Editor) in Radio Korçë was head of Phonographic Radio library (divided in *fonoteka* and *arkivi*). Radio Tirana sup-

10. The most extended department was that of Radio Tirana that included many officeholders, divided in three sections: *muzika e lehtë* (light music); art music (*muzika klasike*) and *popullore* music.

plied most of the recordings. Therefore, the main obligation of the editor was to systematize the materials and provide them according to the scheduled program. Quantity of “Albanian” recordings increased largely beginning with the 1970s.

In spite of their great quantity, the programmes indicate that music was primarily a fill-in material between radio journals, propaganda sections and those few literary sections that interspersed. This production and dissemination was legitimated by the same principles of “allocative power”¹¹ that laid the ground of Eastern socialist systems. The role of bureaucratic apparatus was confined to fulfilling this ideology of appropriation and redistribution as the party set it.¹² To this consideration one should add the complete dependency of the local radio from the formats and initiatives of Tirana, thus making any initiative very restricted and, I would say, almost non-existent.

Serenata Korçare-Programme

The programme represented a turning point in the song repertoire and if one considers this background, in the local radio’s history. This initiative rendered the potentials of the recorded song as a consumerist and industrial product of mass mediation and at the same time, the capabilities of the radio in managing this potential. The radio as a popular media institution was able to create programmes, and then produce and sell the products. Although the terminology of media production may sound not so appropriate to the then Albanian situation of media development, the project can be described as a production of the Department of Music and Programs of Radio Korça (Departamenti i Muzikës dhe Programacionit).

The initial idea according to Grigor Çani was that of a big project, a big show.

11. Verdery 1991b: 420-421

12. Ibid.

The Radio head - director Anesti Tili put down some proposals and ideas that have been successively brought for discussion in the Department assembly (mbledhje). The choices were between a Festival with light songs at the Radio or an initiative dedicated to Songs of Serenata (Këngët e Serenatës), the option that eventually prevailed.

The project dated back to early 1993, that is, two years after the introduction of a new economic system and a pluralist government. Its importance relies first in the shift from centralized administrative formats and the approach of more independent enterprises in radio broadcasting generated within the institution. This independent initiative signaled a small revolution in the history of Radio Korçë, which as a matter of fact, remained an insulated and singular event of that early transitive without opening the way to non-centralized formats. Secondly, its conception as a big show prompted a new level of organization for the creators. An evident indication is the fact that the programme was recorded in the big studio (the so-called *Kamerale*¹³), which up to that moment was seldomly used for broadcasting. The reason for this was, on the one hand, the large studio audience presence that Grigor Çani estimated at 80 people, including participants, speakers and the jury members. It also contained a larger broadcasting desk that could make easier the changes from previously recorded materials and the live aired ones.

The initiative carried on the legacies of a long broadcasting tradition. Although authors aimed to juxtapose new models, such proximity emerges when one looks especially at the format. There is an apparently eloquent and new term: “show” (“*spektakël*”). Nevertheless, the initiative relied largely on the festival logic and the idea of competition. As such, the songs were exposed to the jury that successively was going to choose the best song and the best performer.

To this festival-oriented scheme was juxtaposed the interactive function engendered by the large number of participants in the programme. Although it may sound inappropriate for the connotations it had in Albanian com-

13. Kamerale was the biggest broadcasting studio constructed for holding symphonic orchestra recordings. Today it is used as studio of local Television channel.

unist rule, *Serenata Korçare* represented a programme for the people, not in an ideological sense of the world but as a format that addressed to the audiences and which was interested in hearing their feedback. Participants and the audience in the studio were continuously involved in the show through interviews and conversations. In the subsequent episodes, the speakers also read letters and suggestions from radio listeners. Listening to the voice of each participant, not only as a singer, or performer, but also as a narrator of his or her own story told in his or her own words gave to the show a communicative and open character in front of which the very idea of competitiveness seems to lose weight. Most of the participants partook in this radio programme for the first time and the microphone “filtered” their sensibility during interviews and conversations. They seemed much more absorbed by this setting and by the opportunity of performing and recording these songs, than by the competition.

The profound transformation should be attributed, in my opinion, to the editorial music section (Redaksia e Muzikës) that had a leading role for collecting and preparing the materials. This was how Grigor Çani described the first steps of the project.

The group started work on this program from June [1993]. As a music editor, I had to put together the materials. My first goal was the research in the Radio archive for old songs from Korçë so that we could air them again. Musicians had told me that they recorded many KK during the late 1950s and 1960s, so I had many expectations. To my great disappointment I found only three or four pieces, which meant basically nothing. At this point, I started asking people. I did not know that much about the repertoire. I sang them as every Korçar did, but that was not enough.

This was how the project started. We interviewed people; asked to assist us; to write letters to us for the songs and publicized the event at the Radio. Of course, the musicians, and the families that performed them were not completely unknown, but not all of them. I remember for example that after the first episode, there was a large flow of information. After listening to the first episode, people got more involved. Wrote to us, some meet me in person, along the street, and suggested songs or asked to participate, because they

knew the songs. After the first episode I think, it was not anymore “we” that asked for the songs; the songs “came” to us.¹⁴

Grigor Çani estimated to have collected more than one hundred different items of materials. The material produced for the program included nearly 70 recordings; 66 of which had been broadcast in the show. The four mastered audiocassettes contained 65 song from a selection that also included a few pieces, which had not been aired.¹⁵

The main achievement from this program was that after it was over, we had songs for our library, supplying materials that although very known and familiar in Korçë, have not been recorded before. The cassettes then have been mastered in Radio Tirana that sustained us. And this is another important thing because for the first time, the Radio [Korça] transcended the local geography, and now the ones interested in our work were they [meaning Radio Tirana].¹⁶

Thanks to this project the music section was able to reshape in a very short amount of time its role from a recorder function, to producer and manager. By doing so, Radio Korça succeeded in two main points: first, it fostered revitalization of *Serenata Korçare*, promoting a revival path that would evolve in the successive years beyond this institution; and second, it gave the first important contribution in the documentation of this latent repertoire.

Revival and Documentation

Thinking of this programme merely as a transcription that “supplies” the already-collected data would be a rather reductive position. In a way it certainly did contribute, not so as a simple “supplier”, but rather as an independent event that had its own space in the historical reconstruction of *Këngë Korçare* and what came to be nominated as *Serenata Korçare*. This motivates an analysis of the criteria employed in putting together these songs, its protago-

14. Grigor Çani. Personal Conversation, October 2011; July-August 2012.

15. Among this collection, there were two older recordings from the Radio Archive. Three songs performed by Mihallaq Andrea have been recorded a few months earlier than the project begun and were included in the programme (Mihallaq Andrea. Personal Conversation. September 2013). The other pieces have been recorded for the radio programme.

16. Grigor Çani. Personal Conversation, October 2011; July-August 2012.

nists, and how the whole initiative stands to the history of this repertoire. The program at that moment filled the gap between an offstage practice and the onstage performance. The radio broadcasting, metaphorically speaking became a bridge that brought to the audiences performances that up to that moment were set up in informal venues. This musical experience was also taken in consideration. A song aired during the fifth episode¹⁷ is representative to this argument. The authors recorded it in a domestic setting during a 'special-event' celebration. The recording was then aired alongside three pieces that one of the singer-participants had recorded in the studios of Radio Korçë.

This is an evidence of the process that "extracted" the pieces from an informal participatory setting and "oriented" them towards studio performance. Once the materials had been gathered, a constructive selection followed. Concerning this topic, Grigor Çani retained that it was important to include the protagonists but certain aesthetic criteria on performance had to be justified. The privileged role was bestowed upon the singer-soloist/s, which can be divided in two types. On the one part, there were the ones to whom the songs have been attributed either as authors or as performers. On the other there were popular music singers that were asked by programme creators to participate in the programme. The singers were from Korçë and, presuming familiarity Korçarë had with these songs, it can be suggested that they were already acquainted to this experience. Considering, however, that the latter participated as stage performers and eventually could learn the songs for the programme, my first comments go to this group of protagonists.

Not all of them were professional musicians. Each of the episodes operated on a well-defined structure that combined the participation of three or four protagonists from different generations, active from the late 1930s to those who appeared in the 1980s. The older musicians numbered many. The bulk of

17. Naum Tërova, et al. "Ky fustani jot i zi." *Serenata Korçare-Programme*, Episode 5, Song no. 1 in broadcast order. Radio Korçë, 1993. (The broadcast order list of the songs in each episode can be found in Appendix I. I will refer to this list for the successive notes.)

participants comprised those active from the 1950s. The youngest to participate were two high school students (Ornela Prifti dhe Koço Gliozheni)¹⁸.

My second comment goes to the generation-based structuring of the programme. The prevalence of male performers, either as soloist or in duet versions was evident. Women have usually been a participatory presence, in relation to the male presence. Among male protagonists, there were those that resembled the group in the *parè* format, like *Djemtë e bonbonerisë*, or the singers Gjergji and Ilkë Peleshi, Kiçi Sholla, and Thanas Kondili, and those that sung as soloists. With the exception of Spanja Pipa, the female singers were among the youngest generation. They were invited to participate from the programme editors. Comments by protagonists about their music experiences confirmed once again kin and friendship roles in the preservation and transmission of the song through participatory practices.

The third and final comment goes to the title *Serenata Korçare*. After this program the signified value of the word *Serenata* has been put into a different light. It was widely employed to envelope the repertoire without entirely realizing what this name represented in *Këngë Korçare* repertoire. The programme authors chose a name that reverberated the popular serenading practice which as the speakers emphasized, was banned from the mid 1960s. Nevertheless, the songs did not strictly denote this type of repertoire. Among participants there were those (Thanas Bicolli, Gjergji Peleshi, Thanas Kondili) more directly related to serenading and street singing. Others (Mihallaq Andrea and Ilir Zenuni) performed songs they could not perform onstage for ideological reasons and self-censorship motivations. Their approaches to the song performance had a symbolic value, which did not fit only to the serenading dimension. More emblematic for this argument is the “recovery” of a group of musician that were part of the Revue Troupe (Trupa e Estradës) in the 1960s. They performed a number of songs that had never been recorded or per-

18. They made an interesting case because of the personal request to participate. While the other musicians participated on an invitation from the institution, the young singers went there and asked to participate. They motivated this request by the fact that they knew and sang the pieces very often.

formed on stage. The group's leader and author of the songs was the composer and accordion player Abaz Hajro.¹⁹ Singers were Nusret Frashëri and Spanja Pipa.

It can be said that the reconstruction of this repertoire went far beyond the denomination *Serenata Korçare* and it seems that the authors themselves did not quite realize this when they started the project. The programme revived a corpus of banned and "apartheid" songs. What was initially thought as involving mostly *serenatista* (those that serenaded) turned out to be a repertoire that included also songs performed in different city locales, collectively or intimately shared between the musicians. This repertoire had been "constructed" for nearly forty years. The bulk of it seemed to be the period between the 1950s and 1970s.

This word has been employed in oral accounts during conversations, but this usage seems more influenced by the survival of the song in the last twenty years. When it comes to the long and detailed conversations with the elder musicians, those that "made" the repertoire so to say, they are clear in using the terms. They label *serenata* the practice of performing song outdoors as a form of flirting with "someone". When it comes to describe the broader practice, they tend to define them simply as *këngë* (songs) and the practice as *këndojmë* (sing).

Serenata as deployed from the radio programme was certainly an attractive way for enveloping this 'tradition', but it would be reductive as a denomination for all the songs. It would be overlooking the message incorporated in *singin*, and it is this *message* that appears to me as representative of the Korçare being of these pieces.

19. For Abaz Hajro and the revues see Chapter Eleven, Spanja Pipa: A case-study.



Figure 6. A group of middle class young guys. Some of them are students of the French Lyceum, ca. 1933. (Skali family archive)



Figure 7. Mandolinata group, 1912. (Gjergji Bardhushi family archive).



Figure 8. Picnic in Dardhë, 1937. (Mishel Papakozma family archive)



Figure 9. A paré group of musicians, ca. 1935. (Mishel Papakozma family archive)



Figure 10. Themistokli Gërmenji soundbox, 2013. Photo by Eliano Kalemi.



Figure 11. A parè group of musicians, in the photographer's studio, 1936. (Mishel Papakozma family archive)



Figure 13. Kostaq Osmalli (the first, from the left), ca. 1933. (Ina Osmalli family archive).



Figure 14. Vasil Dishnica in Radio Korçë studio, 1941. (Vasil Dishnica, Personal Archive)



Figure 15. Radio Korça earlier employers. From left to the right: Vasil Dishnica (sound technician), Sotir Kozmo (musician and executive director), Marika Kreko (speaker), Tasi Kanxheri (technician). Vasil Dishnica, Personal Archive.

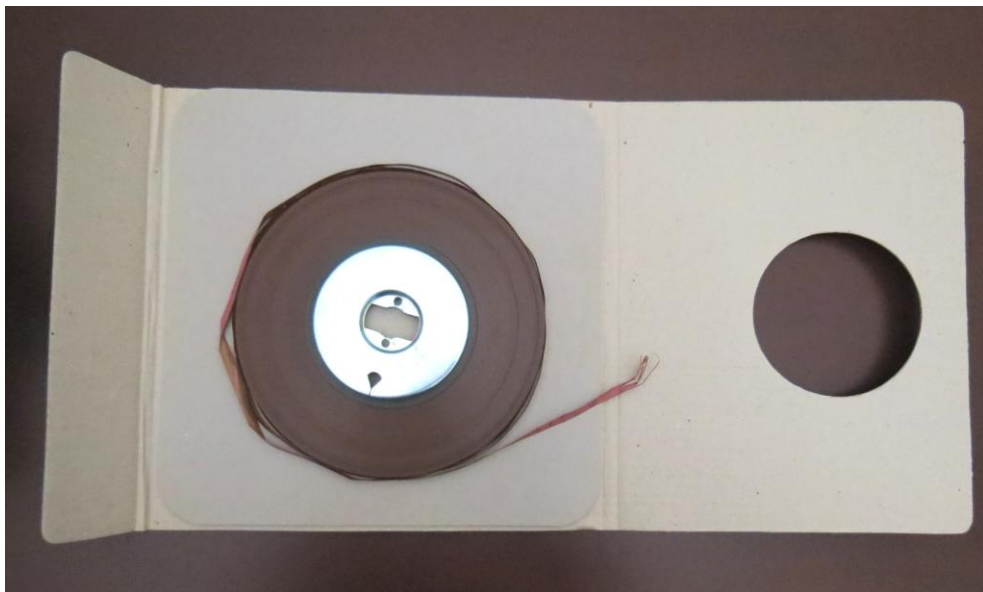


Figure 16. The reel tape containing the recordings from Ligoraq Qano. (I am thankful to Vasil Dishnica and Grigor Çani).



Figure 17. Musicians playing in a wedding, 1964 (I am thankful to Lirika Bicollì).

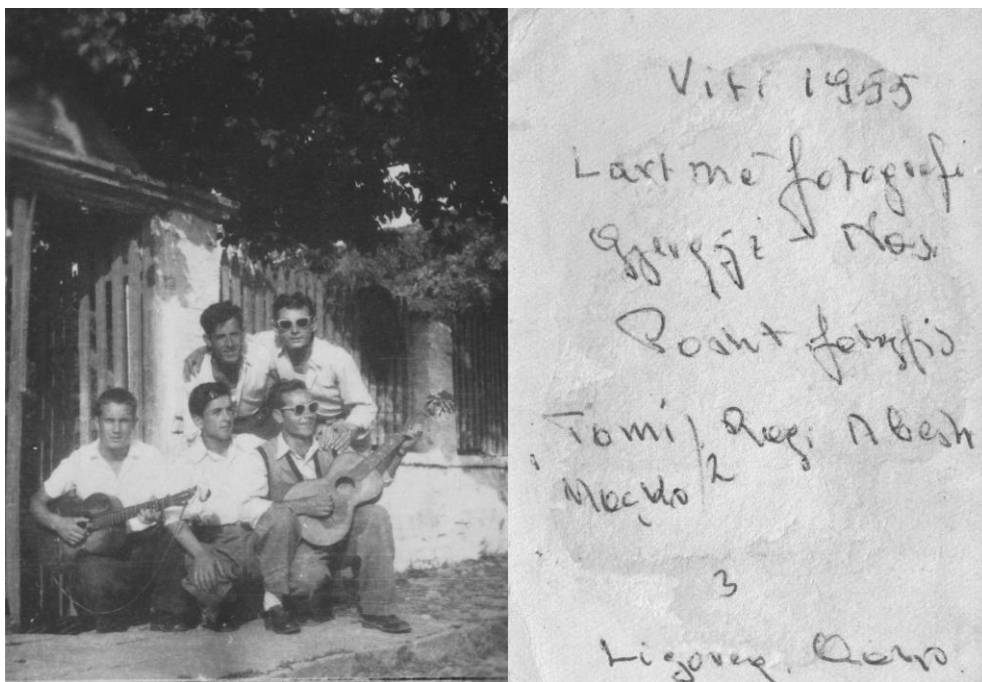


Figure 18. The group of Ligoraq Qano. 1955. Above, left to right: Gjergji Peleshi, Thanas Kondili. Below: Tomi Maço, Raqi Abeshi, Ligoraq Qano (I am thankful to Thanas Kondili).



Figure 19. A group of friends during a special event celebration, ca. 1959. (I am thankful to Lirika Bicolli)



Figure 20. A picnic among friends and colleagues of the theater troupe, ca. 1960. (Spanja Pipa, personal archive)

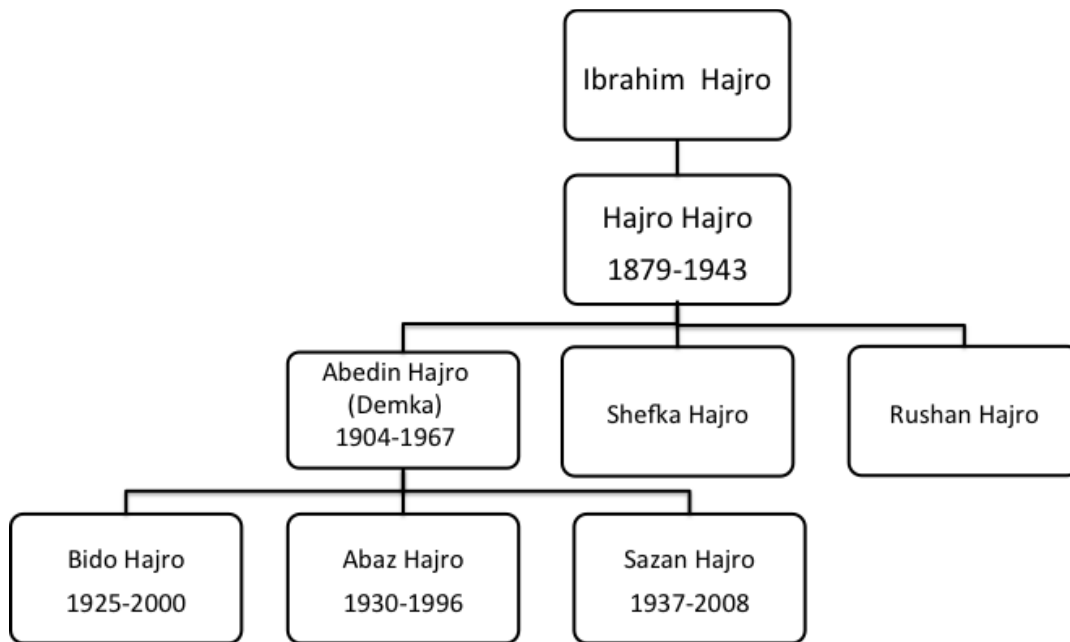


Figure 21. Sketch from the *Hajro* Master-musicians family. (I could not find more information on Shefka Hajro and Rushan Hajro because they migrated in America)



Figure 22. Traditional musicians during an official performance, ca. 1959. (Cultural

Center Archive).



Figure 23. Musicians during an official outdoor celebration, ca. 1980. (Cultural Center Archive)



Figure 24. Lulushi (second from the left) Sazë performing live in a tavern. Mid 1970s. (I am thankful to Alban Plovishti).

Këngë Korçare:
An Analytical Perspective

Mikaela Minga

Chapter 7

Reading the Cosmopolitan and the Local

Këngë Korçare have been anchored as practice in place engendering an active 'tradition'. Yet, they did not denote any reference to 'ethnic' musics. Neither could they be integrated in the romanticized discourses of 'tradition' or 'folklore' that abounded in repertoires like *Saze* performances or rural multi-part polyphonic singing. Although the songs were not foreign to hybridization, fusion and negotiation with the former practices, their very presence represented a sort of challenge to the 'ethnic' and 'authentic' idea in music-making. When one has to broadly delineate them, the horizon of urban and then national oriented popular musics of northern Mediterranean geography is appropriate. The latter includes repertoires such as the Neapolitan song, *Kantadha*, the old-town Dalmatian songs¹, Trieste Songs (*Canti triestini*), French chanson, and successively those that developed within local and regional geographies categorized locally in terms like *Elafro*, in Greece; *Narodna Muzika*, in Yugoslavia, *Këngë e lehtë* in Albania, and *Canzone Leggera*, in Italy.²

One of the immediate issues that surfaces in the analysis of the repertoire is the western imprint in adopting and domesticating closed structured songs

1. I am thankful to Josko Caleta for the discussions on old-town Dalmatian songs.

2. For a broad overview on popular music and local experiences in Europe see Sorce Keller 2000: 204-210

and appropriation of idiosyncratic elements like the singing style, functional harmonic progression, the clear-cut melodic lines, or use of plucked instruments like the guitar and mandolin. Yet, as Peter Manuel has pointed out

[c]ultural borrowing is seldom completely indiscriminate, and is often limited to elements that are in some way compatible with the host culture's musical system. [T]hus, generalizations may be difficult and one must remember that acculturation is not simply a question of the borrowing or syncretism of musical elements, but involves an understanding of the phonemic significance of these elements to native listeners.³

For this reason, it would be useful to analyze acculturation not as a detached criterion, but as a dynamic integral to multiple agencies that nourished the *urban* practice of song-making. The *urban*, employed here, connotes on the one hand politics of dislocation/location, migration and mobility with cosmopolitan signs, national identity formations and the existence of a multilinguistic ethnographic map. On the other hand it is bound to urban class formations, spontaneous creativity (in Gramsci's line)⁴, and everyday contexts of interactivity and socialization.

The Gramscian thought can be helpful in exploring these multiple agencies and music's expressive power to bond them. He conceived cultural relationships and cultural change 'at work', that is, as outcomes of continuous forms of negotiation, imposition, transformation, and resistance. Following Gramsci, Richard Middleton introduced the *articulative* process and theorized it in terms of the appropriative capability of agents to attach to musical forms and practices specific connotations⁵. The articulative process worked out well to the point that music patterns of elements the latter organized came to seem "natural".⁶ What is going to be explored in the following lines is this "working out well" and the seemingly "natural" elements, keeping however in mind that

3. Manuel 1988: 20, 21

4. See for this also Chapter One.

5. Middleton 1990: 8

6. Paraphrasing Middleton 1990: 9

[i]n practice, musical “traditions” are reproduced by performers who engage themselves and others in sequences of actions, experiencing relations among sounds, gestures, and values with direct as well as indirect links to earliest and contemporary actions of [...] other participants.⁷

Dëbora Zbardhi Maletë

Dëbora zbardhi maletë (*The snow whitened the mountains*) is a 16 bar stanza form that I selected for introducing the repertoire.

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Dëbora zbardhi maletë'. It consists of two staves of music in 2/4 time, with a tempo marking of ♩ = 75. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff contains the first eight bars of the melody, and the second staff contains the remaining eight bars, including a double bar line and two first/second endings.

♩ = 75

Dë - bo - ra zbar-dhi ma-le - të _____ Dhe fu - shën ta-të-pje - të _____ Se

10 nje - rë - zi - a s'da-li - në se rru-ga është e shkre - të _____ Se të _____

The melody line after Osmalli 1958: 113-114.

Lira group renders the piece in a slow and relaxed manner.⁸ The lyrics are divided in three quatrains stanzas, with the last two repeated twice. The melody is structured in regular phrase lines, beginning with a peak in the upbeat-downbeat interval (anacrusis) that after a short undulation ends in the strong pulse. The chord progressions render a clear sense of closeness, symmetry, and recapitulation. The phrase endings rest on the following chords I-V-I-I.

In the first stanza a rhyme scheme AABA can be discerned. The other stanzas instead rely heavily in assonance, accentuating the prolonged vowel-sound *ë*⁹. This phonetic element that represents a typical trait, appears in the end of the verses in some cases part of the word's phonetic construction

7. Blum 1991: 8

8. Lira Group. *Dëbora zbardhi maletë*. Recorded in Radio Tiranë, in 1956.

9. Pronounced as the vowel in the article 'the'.

(tatëpjetë, shkretë, syzezë), and in others as adjunct to it (malet-ë, ëmbëlë, bijen-ë). It is a direct link with the local patois.

Dëbora zbardhi malet-ë	The snow whitened the mountains
Dhe fushën tatëpjetë	And the land down low
Se njerëzia s' dalin dot	People stay inside
se rruga është e shkretë	And the streets empty show
Të thashë moj syzezë	I told you, girl with black eyes
Që të mos dashurohemi	We should not fall in love
Dashuria është e ëmbëlë	Love is sweet
Dhe do na hidhërojë	And love is bitter
Të thashë o moj syzezë	I told you, girl with black eyes
Që më s' këndon bilbili	The nightingale sings no more
Se fletët zun' po bijen-ë	The leaves are falling
Dhe po afron ky dimri	And winter is coming

Popularity of this stanza-form highlights the topophilic disposition Korçarë reserve to the city. Although the city's name does not explicitly appear, these elements implicitly confer to this song the "emotive connotation"¹⁰ with Korçë. The song seems to enhance this sensibility with a number of signifieds, such as snow, winter, and mountain. In addition, the lyric-pastoral imagery, a reference to 'folklore' models of creativity is evoked from the nightingale (bilbili), the lover that sings to his girlfriend, the sentimental love, and longing.

A significant role in re-assessing popularity of this song among the audiences goes to the film *Përballimi*¹¹ (1976). Drawing on the story that took place in Korçë, the composer Thoma Gaqi used the melody line as a citation for the

10. Stefani 1973: 40

11. *Përballimi*, Directed by Viktor Gjika. Produced by "Kinostudioja Shqipëria e Re", 1976.

main orchestral leitmotiv. Successively this instrumental theme was broadcast and largely employed for opening and closing program titles¹² of Radio Korçë, attributing to the piece the qualities of an unofficial city's hymn.

Dëshërim i mëmëdheut: Popularization and Politicization

In the earliest printed songbooks there is a distinction between two categories: *Këngë Kombëtare* (National Songs) and *Këngë dashurie* (Love Songs). This partition turned out to be very persistent during the following years. Either those that performed the songs, like *Lira* group, or scholarly studies maintain the difference, which properly speaking, refers primarily to the text, rather than to the music.¹³ In considering the songs that evoke the patriotic theme, I am not drawing on any divisions but I will like to offer a few insights on one of the ways that conveyed musically a national imagery.

I chose a well-documented piece, *Dëshërim i Mëmëdheut* (Longing for the homeland), a song that nowadays is known as *Dua më shumë Shqipërinë* (I love Albania the most).

12. The programme *Serenata Korçare* was just one of the examples.

13. Cf. Koço 2003: 29

Mikaela Minga

$\text{♩} = 120$

Du - a mën - gjet e maj - it kur kën - don bil - bi - li
 bu - kur, kur fryn e - rë - za e ma - lit e - dhe qar - ku ë - sht'i
 sku - qur du - a lu - le të fu - shë - së në mën - gjet kur jan' plot me
 ve - së, doç - kat e bar - dha të çu - pë - së, ve - te me vrap që t'i
 pre - së. Po nga gjith a - to më pa - rë du - a më shu -
 më Shqi - pë - ri - në, që të ve - jë pu - na mba - rë
 e - dhe për je - të të ke - të li - ri - i - në.

The melody line after Tole Adham and *Lira* Group. Recorded in Radio Tirana, ca. 1956. (Transcribed by Mikaela Minga).

This song echoes the patriotic spirit and a nostalgic pastoral image. It is a binary contrasting structure, with the scheme AB+C, where AB is the first part in G minor, and C stands for the chorus, in the relative, B-flat major. The song has a ternary waltz rhythm.

A

Dua mëngjeset e majit/Kur këndon, bilbil' i bukur
 [Yearn for the May mornings/when the nightingale sings]

Kur fryn erëza e malit/Edhe qarku është' i skuqur
[When the mountain breeze blows/and the edge inflamed is]

B
Dua luletë të fushësë,/ Në mëngjes kur janë plot me vesë
[Yearn for the flowers in the field/with the morning dew]
Doçkat e bardha të çupësë/ vete me vrap që t'i presë
[The small white hands of the girl/I run for touching]

C
Po nga gjithë ato më parë/ Dua më shumë Shqipërinë
[But more than anything else/yearn for Albania]
Që të vejë puna mbarë/ Edhe për jetë të ketë lirinë
[So that could be blessed/and forever freedom could have]

The second part of the song is less proportionate and does not “obey” to quatrain rules. It distributes the melody in unequal phrases, delineated from high climax on imperfect cadences with continuous caesuras.

According to documented sources, this was one of the earliest pieces in the urban repertoire to render the patriotic sensibility. Giuseppe Mauro, an Arbëresh tenor performed the piece for the first time in a Theater in Bucharest (1904) among the Albanian speaking Diaspora that lived there.¹⁴ It was recorded by the same artist in the United States, alongside a few other songs in Albanian language.¹⁵ Thoma Avraham or Avrami (1869-1923), a literary figure of the national rebirth wrote the lyrics. Nick Mano is the author of the music. Almost nothing is known about the author of the music, yet the recording version that survives helps greatly in placing the music style in the early twentieth century popular pieces inspired by the Neapolitan song tradition.

14. Grameno 1912: 17. Bello (1985-1986: 20) gives the event in the year 1905.

15. Giuseppe Mauro. *Deshërim i mëmdeheut*. Music by Nick Mano, Lyrics by Thoma Avrahami. Matrix B-21385-2.

Issued on Victor 72186, New York, 19 February 1918.

http://victor.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/matrix/detail/700006501/B-21385-Deshrim_i_mmdeheut (accessed 1.3.2013).

For Albanian recordings issued in the United States from 1893 to 1943 see Spottswood 1990: 1129-1132.

This recording was released in the United States, in 1923. The performer is Spiridon Ilo, a student of Giuseppe Mauro¹⁶, that supposedly preserves the style of the original version. It has stereotyped song orchestration patterns, with piano and orchestra that play in a moderate waltz rhythm. The singer has a pitched voice posture articulated as an operatic singer.

A song such as *Dëshërim i Mëmëdheut* brings into the field of discussion nationalism and music's malleability for representing the nation. Following Philip Bohlman on this topic,

it can be said that "[e]ach nation in Europe can claim national and nationalist music, but the ways in which those repertoires interact with each other are specific to the nation, as well as to the particular historical moment in which music is defining the nation."¹⁷

The articulation of song-types like *Dëshërim i Mëmëdheut* had specific appropriation routes, in concomitance with the national movement and the process of "popularization and politicization"¹⁸ related to it. Two levels of agencies can be discerned in this particular case: the first is that of Diaspora agencies and the "dislocated" character: performance of *Dëshërim i Mëmëdheut* took place in Bucharest, a core center for the Albanian movement; an *Arbëresh* performed the song and a few years later in the United States contributed promoting "Albanian" recordings.¹⁹ Then there is a second, "located" level: the print version of the lyrics in 1909' *Këngëtore (Songbook)*²⁰ and the recording version by Tole Adham and *Lira* group, dating in the 1950s.²¹ This is also the most known version of the song; the one that "confirmed" so to say, the belonging to *Këngë Korçare* and its popularization among Albanian audiences.

16. Spiridon Ilo. *Dëshërim i Mëmëdheut*. Issued on *Albanian Phonographic Records* no. 146 – B. New York, 1923.

Spiridon Ilo (1876-1950) was a self-taught musician. An engaged activist for the national cause, he was among the representatives that signed the Independence Act of Albania in 1912. Afterwards, he immigrated in the United States and in 1923 founded a recording company named "The Albanian Phonographic Records". For Giuseppe Mauro and Spiridon Ilo see Bello 2012: 88. Information on his activity among Albanian Diaspora in America can be found in: N. A. "Z. Gjuseppe Mauro." *Përparimi*, September 1917: 5-6

17. Bohlman 2004: 81.

18. Bohlman 2004: 49

19. Spottswood 1990: 1130

20. Grameno 1912: 16-17

21. Tole Adham (1913-1998) was a singer that gained popularity for his performances of *Këngë Korçare* in live concerts and through Radio broadcast. He was one of the most prominent soloists in *Lira* group.

The piece is performed in a slower rhythm in this second version and is accompanied by *mandolinata*. Two arpeggio chords played by the guitar as rhythmic introduction precede the tenor voice that sings in his lower register. The mandolins double the melody line with tremolos. The refrain is performed as a chorus response to the first part. This version “ratified” as ‘refrain’ the last strophe of the lyrics and popularized the song with the title *Dua më shumë Shqipërinë (I love Albania the most)*.

Nationalism had a greater part in the earliest articulative relationships. Besides songbooks, an episode described by Nathalie Clayer can sustain this argument further. It took place in the early decades of the twentieth century among the Orthodox-Christian community. During a popular religious celebration called *Kolendra*, people used to mingle patriotic and religious songs and sing them in Albanian language²². These forms promote on a local level national-oriented ideas. For Philip Bohlman,

[n]aming a nation through music is inevitably a top-down gesture. An intellectual and political elite representing the nation appropriates and consolidates power by extending the nation’s name to as many as musical phenomena as possible.²³

Bohlman sees a generic process of national imagination, which in my opinion is not so compact. I see a plurality of musical nationalist visions. Some of these have been highlighted for example by Jane Sugarman in her article “Imagining the Homeland”.²⁴ The point I want to make is that top-down gestures and grassroots agencies very often intermingled and that of a greater relevance in promoting the national visions were also age, gender factors, migration, religious backgrounds of the agents.

The historical itinerary of this song suggests an urban form of national vision that had a socially embedded character. If we think musically about a song such as *Dëshërim i Mëmëdheut*, it can be said that it represented incorporation of Albanian language to urban-based popular European mores of

22. Kolendra is a ritual celebration on Christma’s Eve: children and youngsters knock in people’s homes singing songs and having small cakes named ‘kolendra’. For this description see Pepo 1962: 264, 267. In Clayer 2012: 594-595.

23. Bohlman 2004: 48

24. See Sugarman 1999.

musicking. The latter were present in many of the Mediterranean urban centers and were fueled by intensification of interregional and intercontinental connections. Relevant for me in these dynamics is the role of individuals in the process of interaction between “modes of cosmopolitan and vernacular belonging.”²⁵ Thinking in such terms is how we arrive at the level of cultural flow

that [...] consists of the externalizations of meaning which individuals produce through arrangements of overt forms, and the interpretations which individuals make of such displays - those of others as well as their own.²⁶

Tefta Tashko Koço and Korçaria e Bukur

I would like to explore *Këngë Korçare* through these cosmopolitan and vernacular lenses and consider here agencies of highly educated singers in promoting the song. The agencies of these singers succeeded in popularizing and disseminating a song repertoire between the two World Wars that has been considered of a particular influence in Albanian history of music. Eno Koço offers a comprehensive contribution in the research on this repertoire that he defined as “Albanian Urban Lyric Song”²⁷. Departing from his work that is concentrated mostly on the music analysis of these songs, I would like to broaden the line of analysis beyond performance per se.

First, I want to look at these singers as specific cultural subjects and second, consider the impact they exerted upon their audiences from a bottom-up perspective.²⁸ By doing so, it can be observed that these artists acted as “cultural brokers”²⁹. They did not only shape music tastes among Albanian

25 My Italics. This interpretative approach derives from Jackson Pollock (2000: 595) and his comparative interpretation of vernacular and cosmopolitan in history. See also Pollock, Bhaba, Breckenbridge, Chakrabarty 2000. *Cosmopolitanism* has gained ample interpretations in recent ethnomusicology and popular music studies. See more notably Turino 2003; Stokes 2004; Feld 2012; Tsioulakis 2011.

27. Hannerz 1992: 4

28. Koço 2002; 2004

28. This is an aspect that Koço briefly touched, when commented on receptions that recordings of Albanian Urban Song had in South Albania, including also feedback from prominent singers. See his comment on Nexhmije Pagarusha (b.1933) one of the most prominent popular singers in Kosova (Koço 2004: 93).

29. Blum 1991: 13-16

musicians but engendered also forms of vernacularization. Korça's audiences were very much into the forms of connection these brokers established between the local world, national imaginary, and the level of cultural flows. A reason for this was because the majority of these artists were Korçarë and the city offered the most important venues for their performance and recordings' dissemination. Without implying here that *Këngë Korçare* developed as an outcome of their agencies, their agencies seem to have their own significant part.

The activity of one singer more in particular, Tefta Tashko Koço (1910-1947) seems to me more relevant to the case. Tefta Tashko Koço³⁰ was trained as a soprano in France and Italy. She was born in Fayium (Egypt) where her family migrated but spent her childhood and early teens in Korçë. Here she got the first music studies. Her career started in the late 1920s, when she and a few other musicians recorded in France for the *Pathé* label a number of songs in Albanian language³¹ entangled in style with in-vogue popular repertoires from that period: tango, operetta songs, and French chanson style. With the exception of the two leading roles in *La Bohème* and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* taking place in Beograd, in 1945³², Tashko Koço built her career in Albania as a concert soloist. She toured actively with other colleagues performing a repertoire that combined opera pieces and songs. Some of these were newly composed by highly educated musicians, others were arranged melodies for voice and piano collected in Elbasan, Korçë, and Shkodër. This repertoire was recorded in Milan for Columbia (Società Fonografica Columbia), in 1937 and 1942.³³

The type of songs fitted to the idea of national culture and undermined products that could convey primarily this imaginary. Yet, the reasons why she makes a case apart in a 'broker' activity are to be found in her possibility to be imposed to the audiences as a public artist through both recordings and live performances. She made frequent appearances in the music events from 1927 up to 1946, showing a particular care for constructing and presenting her pub-

30. For a biography on Tefta Tashko Koço see Bello 2012

31. Koço 2000: 229

32. Bello 2012: 142-159

33. Koço 2000: 230-234

lic image as singer and woman artist. The recordings (nearly 60 pieces) made her one of the few artists to gain popularity by the phonogenic qualities of her voice.

Tefta Tashko Koço appeared in two main recording sessions producing the largest corpus of recordings of an Albanian singer between the wars. The first ones have been issued by Pathé label, in Paris, in 1930. At that time, she was a student at Montpellier Conservatory. She joined the project by an invitation of an Albanian migrant, Neço Muko³⁴ and performed seven songs. The latter were close to the urban popular repertoire of that period labeled by Neço Muko as *sentimental (sentimentale)*.³⁵ The second group of recordings included two sessions, in Milan, in 1937 and in 1942. She recorded nearly 50 pieces³⁶, in which her performance is more close to the idea of an art song. Having also in mind these sessions, Eno Koço distinguished in his study two different vocal approaches: the “operatic one” versus the “melodramatic one”³⁷. The former seems associated with the Columbia recordings, evidencing a more elaborated posture and vocal-emission. The second can be associated with the ‘lighter’ style of Pathé releases.

Sensibility for the recording legacy of Tefta Tashko can be traced in specific titles that have been incorporated in *Këngë Korçare* repertoire such as *Kroi i fshatit tonë*³⁸(*Fountain of our village*), *Kur më vjen burri nga stani*³⁹(*When my husband comes from the herd*). More specific in the interaction between cosmopoli-

34. Neço Muko, known also as Neço Muko Marrioti, Nestor Muko (1899-1934) was a traditional singer of multipart polyphonic songs, poet, songwriter, author of sketches, comic poetry and music manager. Besides “light” popular genres, Muko recorded in the Pathé session *lab* polyphonic songs from south Albania, together with his group of singers. For more information on Muko’s activity and the recordings see Pali 2004; Koço 2010: 11-34

35. Koço 2010: 20

36. For the Colombia discography of Tefta Tashko Koço see Koço 2004: 282-284; For a full discography of the singer see Koço 2000: 229-234

37. Koço 2004: xxiv-xxvi; 56-58

38. Tefta Tashko Koço. *Kroi i fshatit tonë*. Poradecare. Lyrics by L. Poradeci, Orchestra, Advised by T.T. Koço. No. 10845/D.10311. Issued on Columbia Recordings, Milan, 1937.

39. Tefta Tashko Koço. *Kur më vjen burri nga stani*, Albanian Satiric Song. Lyrics by L. Poradeci, Priority by K. Kono, T. Tashko. CB8263/DQ.3705. Issued on Columbia Recordings, Milano, 1937.

tan and vernacular modes in music making is, in my opinion, the case of *Korçaria e bukur*⁴⁰.

This tango song presents a particular case for my argument because of its 'life cycle' in the urban repertoire.

♩ = 100

Kor-çar' e bu-kur si pu-pe, më tho-në shu-më kën-gë

Ku do që shkoj më ve-në re ngri hen të gjith' në këm-bë.

Ah m'oj kor-çar' e bu-kur si pu-pe Me shik e na-ze shum' si nus' e re.

Kur shkon nganj'-her' e ve-tëm në bul-va-ar. Në zem-rën to-në ndi-zet flak' e zjarr'.

After the recording of Tefta Tashko Koço, Kleo Georga. *Korçaria e bukur*. Disc 44022. Issued on Pathé, Paris, 1930. Transcribed by Mikaela Minga.

The first cosmopolitan trait of the piece is the transcultural tango genre⁴¹. The piece is accompanied by a small ensemble consistent of a piano and two violins. The piano has the main role in the accompaniment with a left hand that accentuates the habanera rhythm and the right that proceeds with arpeggios and improvised responses. To the quasi-recitative singing style of the verse, performed solo by Tashko Koço, responds the refrain, in which a se-

40. Tefta Tashko Koço, Kleo Georga. *Korçaria e bukur*. Disc 44022. Issued on Pathé, Paris, 1930. Neço Muko published also a catalogue with songs' lyrics in Albanian language. For *Korçaria e bukur* (Marrioti (Muko) [193-]: 29) he specified: "Tango – vjersha [lyrics by] N. H. Marriotit (Muko) [...] Kënduar prej Z/shave [sung by] Tefta Tashko dhe Kleo Georga. Shoqëruar me piano dhe dy violi [Piano and two Violins Accompaniment]."

41. See for that Pelinski 2001: 1132-1152.

cond vocalist (Kleo George) intervenes. The location of this experience has implications as well, considering that the recording took place in a cosmopolitan Paris of the 1930s.⁴² The musicians hired in the instrumental ensemble were Italians, who worked as live musicians. The same can be said for the singers as well. Excluding Tefta Tashko Koço and Llambi Turtulli then students, the others worked in the city's theaters and were not described as Albanian speaking artists.⁴³

More interesting in this discussion seems to me the role of Neço Muko, promoter and manager of this enterprise and at the same time, lyricist of the pieces. Muko can be described as a dislocated agent who acted within the Diaspora setting and was influenced by the musics of the metropolis. Janko Pali, his friend and biographer notes that he was very gifted in adapting lyrics of his own to melodies and motives he heard.⁴⁴ He had fluent capacities of Greek, French and Albanian languages speaking and also the experience of a traditional singer. With *Korçaria e bukur* he appropriated the aesthetic of a chansonnier.⁴⁵

Korçar' e bukur si pupë,
Më thonë shum' me këngë
Kurdo që dal më vënë re,
Ngrihen të gjithë më këmbë

Beautiful Korçare, like *poupée*
Many people sing to me
Where ever I go they gaze me
And all stand up

Disa më thon' "Të dashuroj"
Ke shtatin si mbretëresha
Sa fjal' të ëmbla un' dëgjoj
Sa këngë dhe sa vjersha

Some say "I love you"
Your are beautiful like a queen
I hear so sweet words
So many songs and verses

Ah moj Korçar'e bukur si pupë
Me shik e naze shum' si nus'e re

O *moj* Korçare, beautiful *poupée*
Your grace and charm, like a

42. For bibliographic sources on Paris and music experiences see Scott 2008; Whiting 1999: 7-58; Weisberg 2001.

43. The other singers were Tulla Paleologu and Kleo George. For the details see Pali 2004: 13-65 and more in particular 46-50. See also Bello 2012: 85-87; Varfi 1996: 5-15.

44. Koço 2010: 11-34.

45. On French Chanson see Hawkins 2000.

	young bride
Kur shkon nganjëherë vetem në <u>bulvar</u>	When you walk in the boulevard
Në zemrën tonë ndezet flak e zjarr	Our hearts burn in flames
Në mes të natës në qetsi	In the silence of the night
Nënë ballkonin shkojnë	They stay under my balcony
Bien kitarës me ëmbëlsi	Play sweetly on guitar
Rrinë dhe më këndojnë	Stay and sing form me
Pa del njëherë në ballkon,	Come by the balcony
Pa del o vajz' e bukur	O beautiful girl
Se shpirti ynë fluturon	Our spirit flies
Dhe bëhemi të lumtur	And we are happy

The lyrics convey an overt imagery that romanticized this girl from Korçë (Korçaria), coinciding with the singer place of provenance. In spite of the locative power that the verses have, its serenading imagery, the use of Albanian lyrics, and the “Korçare” protagonist display the same dislocated character of the protagonists that made the recording. From this point of view, it is Korçaria, not Korçë and it is the Paris *boulevard* the imagery of this song.

This piece does not appear in any of the concert-programs of Tashko Koço in Albania, which suggests that the song circulated primarily through recordings.⁴⁶ The verbalized imagery of the lyrics, the serenading references, sentimental love and feminine gaze evoked the sense of place prompting a much longer life cycle of this song than Tashko Koço’s one. This is a process that can be labeled as vernacularization; generated by continuity and variance of the song practice to the point that a different version of the song emerges.

46. This observation is based on the evidence “Programe koncertesh” (Concert programs) provided in Koço 2000: 235-255. I believe that *Pathë* recordings circulated widely in Korçë. Alongside, *Korçaria e bukur*, two other songs survive from these discs: *Varfëria (Poverty)*, Pathé Disc 44013 and *E mban mend (Do you remember)*, Pathé Disc 44017.

Korçaria e bukur becomes *O moj Korçare* (Hey you Korçare) in the transcriptions of Kostaq Osmalli⁴⁷ and in *Lira's* recording. Lyrics “make” a gendered shift in the narrator-performer: from the feminine protagonist of the lyrics that narrates in first person, to the male/s that gaze and sing for her.

Oh, moj Korçar'e bukur si pupe	O moj Korçare, beautiful <i>poupée</i>
Me ato naze shum' si nus' e re	Your grace is like that of young bride]
Dhe kur më shkonje ti në në boulevard,	When you go down the boulevard
Zemrat tona digjen flak' e zjarr	Our hearts burn in flames
Në mes të natës në qetsi,	In the silence of the night
Ti në ballkon po rrinje	You stayed at the balcony
Un të këndonja me ëmbëlsi	I sung to you
Dhe tinë më dëgjonje	And you listened to me

The other change is the switch from habanera and 4/4 beat to the dactylic form of an *aksak* rhythm: 7/8 with the scheme 3+2+2. It can be found in Korça's traditional music practices although it is also widespread in the Balkan region.⁴⁸ In this shift, the phrase structuring is more symmetrical, configured in two bars, and sustained by longer cadence.

The song is widely performed in singing practices and represents one of the most iconic pieces in the repertoire of *Këngë Korçare*. *Korçaria e bukur* and *O moj Korçare* can be considered at this point two different songs, each one displaying different attributes and different life-cycles: the first has a cosmopolitan-based quality, now important for the 'archeological' value it may represent to the researcher, or the recording collector. The latter is the outcome of a local experience of song-making, externalized through performance and collectively shared in singing practices.

47. Osmalli 1958: 47-48

48. For a bibliographic source on *aksak* I have been referred more notably in: Fracile 2003: 197-210; Staiti 2013; Brailoiu 1951.

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$\text{♩} = 110$

Në mes të na - tës në qet' - si _____ ti në ball-kon po rri - nje _____

5
Un' të kën - do - ja m'ëm-bël - si _____ dhe ti-në më dë - gjo-nje _____ O moj kor-çar' e

10
bu - kur si pu - pe _____ me a - to na - ze shum'-si nu - se' re _____ dhe kur më shko - je

16
ti në bu - le va-ard _____ zem - rat to - na di-gjen flak' e zja - arr _____ dhe kur më shko - je

22
ti në bu - le va-ard _____ zem - rat to - na di - gjen flak' e zja - arr.

The melody line after Osmalli 1958: 47-48

Chapter 8

‘Mi Erë Të’: Appropriation Techniques and Creative Mechanisms

It is not uncommon in *Këngë Korçare* to find borrowed melodies to which have been adapted Albanian lyrics. One of these pieces is *I pabesë çfarë zemër paske* (*Unfaithful, where is your heart*).¹ The song is performed by Pirro Suljoti, a high tenor voice. This song re-appeared in the program *Serenata Korçare* in 1993. It was considered as one of the few original recordings to have survived from the popular pieces of the 1960s. Accompanied with the Radio ensemble (accordion, violin and guitar), the piece stood to the newly recorded pieces of the program for its “archeological” values. *I pabesë çfarë zemër paske* (*Unfaithful*) is the “cover” version of a Dalmatian Old Town Song, *Na te Mislim* (*Thinking of You*), popular in the once Yugoslavia.²

The domestication of mostly in-vogue repertoires is based on an appropriative mechanism. In the earliest songbooks (*Këngëtore*)³, some of the lyrics

1. Pirro Suljoti, *I pabesë çfarë zemër paske*. Recorded in Radio Korçë, ca. 1960. The piece was broadcast during *Serenata Korçare-Programme*, Episode 1, Song no. 1 in broadcast order. Radio Korçë, 1993.

2. On Dalmatian town songs see Caleta 1997; 1999. *Na te Mislim* belongs to this ‘old town songs’ repertoire (‘starogradske’). The music of this piece is attributed to Strgar Hedviga. The earliest transcribed version of the song is published in *Hrvatska pjesmarica: sbirka popjevaka za skupno pjevanje* [Croatian song book: collection of the songs for collective singing], in Klaić 1893. (For this information I am thankful to Josko Caleta). For a recorded version see Vera Svoboda. “Na Te Mislim Kada Zora Sviće”. Narodna. Yugoslavia: Yugoton Epy-3620, 1966 (Track B2).

3. See for that Sakoli 1909; Grameno 1912. Vasil Ballauri (2003: 26) has also commented on this practice.

have a small note that says: “Mi erë të”. The titles that follow are “La Spagnola”, “Torna a Surriento”⁴, two Neapolitan songs, and then two French Chansons.⁵ This detail led me to suppose that “mi erë të” was an old expression meaning “based on”, or “adapted from”. The word *erë* – in current Albanian the signified for *wind* - made me however rather inquisitive. Standing to an Albanian vocabulary published in 1941, the signifier-signified of *erë* connoted primarily ideas on place (*vend*) and space (*hapësirë*).⁶ ‘Mi erë të’ seems associated with the melody, to which the words had been incorporated.

The ‘active’ use of appropriated melodies like this can be traced in “Ola Pseftika”⁷, a song by the renowned greek singer Sofia Vembo. Koci Zdruli had written down the lyrics in his notebook evidencing the year 1951. They are in Greek and Albanian languages. *Ola Pseftika* (*All lies*) is a tango song from the 1930s, a period in which this genre was very popular in Greece.⁸ The version with Albanian words has been recorded for the first time in 1993 as *Desha të rroja në vetmi* (*Want to live in loneliness*)⁹, thus suggesting that the piece had been “in use” for nearly forty years. This version is performed considerably slower. The regular 4/4 makes almost undistinguishable for those that haven’t heard Vembo’s version the tango song and the typical arrangements: piano rhythmic groove, minor/major harmonies between the verse and chorus and the orchestra’s accompaniment. The arrangement in the later version includes a bass-guitar that plays the harmonic progressions, a Hammond-like synthesizer sound, an accordion and a guitar that plays secondary melodies. The female artist (Afërdita Zonja) is a soprano, abundantly reverberated.

4. La Spagnola. Music and lyrics by V. Di Chiara. Napoli: F. Bideri, 1911; *Torna a Surriento*, Music by E. De Curtis, Lyrics by G. De Curtis. Napoli: Bideri, 1909.

5. Interestingly, the song collectors of these earlier editions were more impelled in clarifying this fact than their successors.

6. Tase 1941: 45-46

7. Sofia Vembo. “Ola Pseftika.” Music by Kostas Ianidis; Lyrics by Panos Papadukas. His Master’s Voice, Disc Number AO-2473, Matrix OGA-765, 1938. Re-issued in *The Greek Light Song / The best of Sofia Vembo*, Vol. 1 [1933 - 1940]. 2010 Olympus (Track no. 11)

8. Mazower 2004: 384-401

9. Afërdita Zonja. “Desha të rroja në vetmi.” *Serenata Korçare-Programme*. Episode 6, Song no. 6 in broadcast order. Radio Korçë, 1993.

The perseverance of mnemonic practices in this repertoire brings into the field of discussion “secondary orality”¹⁰ modes of transmission. Basically a song that is originally written or disseminated as a recorded production “starts circulating by word of mouth.”¹¹ To my knowledge, music editions on this repertoire were almost inexistent. Conversations with singers and musicians showed that they did not rely on notation or on music transcriptions for learning songs. Printed Songbooks and when it was not possible, handwritten notebooks worked out for remembering the lyrics. Radio, cinema, and discs seem to have provided the main source for melodies, or themes. Partially, this can be explained with the fact that most of the protagonists were self-trained musicians and did not have literal music skills. Yet, could this “disregard” for music literacy, be looked also as a cognitive act in which certain formula or predefined models are employed?

“Composition, [be that] literary and musical, relies to some extent on formulas of one sort or another.”¹² Popular music scholars have pointed out the existence of tune-families, stock structures, and motifs that “wander” from one piece to another.¹³ Thinking about these cases and their application in popular music studies, I found useful Peter van der Merwe’s concept of the ‘matrix’ theorized as a “unit of musical communication” in which “well-understood patterns fall.”¹⁴

These matrixes are operative in the “compositional projects”¹⁵ of Ligoraq Qano and friends. The recordings served for listing down the usage of specific matrixes:

1. The major/minor mode shift between verse and chorus.
2. The ballroom dance rhythms: 6/8 and 3/8 waltzes and the 2/4 polka.
3. The melodic articulation of voice and introduction of a secondary vocalist in tertian intervalls.

10. Ong 1982; Zumthor 1990. See also Macchiarella 2012a: 2-3.

11. Sorce Keller 2012: 243

12. Sorce Keller 2012: 20

13. Middleton 1990: 136-137. See also Nettl 2005: 113-116.

14. Van der Merwe 1989: 96; 94

15. Sorce Keller 2012: 19-21

4. Alternation of the male voice register in timber and intensity, close to a light tenor, but contained in range and intensity.

5. The simple harmonic chords progressions obtained from a guitar accompaniment and played with a regular harmonic rhythm.

Ligoraq Qano (1935-1991) was a self-taught musician. He played on guitar and was talented in making verses. During fieldwork, I contacted a close friend, the poet Vangjush Ziko. The latter used to join him and other friends for singing together. Ziko gave some insights that sustain the arguments discussed here. We focused on these recordings and here is how he commented the case:

Ligoraq [Qano] had talent for such things. Liked very much these songs, as every young guy [from Korçë]. But it cannot be said that he composed the songs. They are *sajesa* [inventions; made up]. He used melodies, or motives; experts he learned by heart; heard from musical films, songs, motives in Greek language, and adapted them; he organized in some sort. This made the songs similar with the ones we heard, but dissimilar at the same time. No one of us ever thought writing them down *me nota* [using notation].

Maybe, among them there were melodies he created; but I think that things worked out like this. I wrote sometimes a few verses, but he was talented in combining them as well. Then the pieces were played often, because we used to gather; we did *serenata* at that time [1950s-early 1960s]; other friends learned them, and they became known.¹⁶

Ligoraq Qano can be described as a participative listener that thanks to his musical and literary skills, appropriated given matrices and created then its own variants, combining, recreating versions that he applied to the local imagery of song making.

These pieces were well known to his generation. Almost all songs have been recorded as 'surviving' versions, in 1993 for *Serenata Korçare* - programme. The historical recording version helps tracing the practice as a "dialectic of continuity and active use (recreation/selection/variation)¹⁷ and as a dynamic of preservation and remembrance. Following this line, one may run the risk to be repetitive in affirming that the songs are *the same* and at the same

16. Vangjush Ziko. Personal Conversation. August 2012.

17. Middleton 1990: 135. His italics.

time they are *different*. It is worth to take this risk and elucidate this assumption with another analysis: the song *Drenovarja* (*The Girl from Drenova*).

Drenovarja is a “cover” of a very popular hit song, *La Petite Tonkinoise*¹⁸. This song is written in 2/4 time and combines elements of a military march with an upbeat-type polka rhythm. It is a verse-refrain form, regular in the repetitive phrases and the complementary pair structuring. The author Vincent Scotto composed an earlier version as *Le Navigatore*¹⁹ but the piece had been popularized as *La Petite Tonkinoise* by the café-concert singer Polin, Josephine Baker, and many others. The recording industry influenced largely its popularity. The song can be found in different versions, including movies and documentaries. A simple YouTube research provides plentiful examples in different languages and arrangements.

18. *Petite Tonkinoise*, Music by Vincent Scotto; Lyrics by George Villard and Henri Christiné, 1906 by Éditions Salabert. In *Un Siècle de Chansons Françaises: Volume 1879-1919: 301 Chansons Française de 1879 à 1919: Parole & Musique*. Paris: CSDEM, 2003.

19. Mark Brill. "Scotto, Vincent." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.pros.lib.unimi.it/subscriber/article/grove/music/25263> (accessed 1 March 2013).

♩ = 100 §

Voice

Pour qu'fi - ni-se Mon ser - vi-ce Au Ton - kin je suis par - ti Ah! quel
 beau pa-ys, mes - da-mes C'est l'pa - ra-dis des p'tit's fem-mes Ell's sont bel-les Et fi - dè-les Et je
 suis dev'-nu l'ché - ri D'un' pe - tit' femm' du pa - ys Qui s'ap - pell' Mé-la-o - li Je suis
 go - bé d'un' pe - ti - te C'est une An - na, c'est une An - na, une An - na - mi - te Elle est
 vive, elle est char - man - te C'est comme un z'oi-seau qui chan - te Je l'ap - pell' ma p'tit' bour -
 geoi - se Ma Ton - ki - ki, ma Ton - ki - ki, Ma Ton - ki - noi - se Y'en a d'autr's quim'fontles doux
 yeux Mais c'est ell' que j'aim' le mieux. D.S.

After *Un siècle de chansons françaises: volume 1879-1919: 301 chansons française de 1879 à 1919: parole & musique.* Paris: CSDM, 2003.

Author of the lyrics in Albanian version is Loni Llogori.²⁰ He 'transposes' exoticism of the little *Tonkinoise*, in romanticism of *Drenovarja*, an idyllic sentimental love-story between the poet and the girl from Drenova.²¹

A

Një dit' shkova nga Drenova,

Once I went in Drenova

20. Loni Llogori (1871-1929) was a poet of *Rilindja Kombëtare*, originary from Korçë. He migrated at a very early age in Egypt and spent there the largest part of his life. Became engaged in the national movement. Llogori is also author of other lyrics from the repertoire of this period.

21. Drenova is a village of Upper Devolli, less than 10 km far from Korçë. (This piece has no relation to the song "Girl from Drenova" that is mentioned in Adela Peeva's documentary *Whose is this song.*)

Gjeta një vajzë të re,
Ish e bukur ish e mitur
Duket ishte fort e ngjitur.
Dhe më thotë me zë plotë
Zot që më ve kaqë re
Në do udhënë të gjesh,
Aj me mua dhe mos qesh

And meet a young girl
She was beautiful and infantile
Looked confident and persuasive
She spoke out to me
God, I see you are attracted by me
If you want to find your way
Follow and make no fun of me

B
Jam i lodhur thashë fare
Moj Drenova, moj Drenova,
moj Drenovare
Rrimë pakë në lëndinë
të flasim për dashurinë
Se ti zemrën ma more,
Moj malëso, moj malëso,
moj malësore
Me këtë bukuri që ke,
Ma bëre udhën ta le.

I am tired, very tired
Ej Drenovare
Let's lay down in the grass
And talk about love
You stole my heart
Highlander girl
Your beauty
Made me feel lost

C
Ndenjmë pranë
Dhe më një anë
Më shtinte nga një vështrim
Unë me syt' ment a hanja
Doçkën ndë timet ja mbanja
Kur më thotë me zë plotë
Në më do me nder si trim

Tek im atë aj të vesh
Më kërko dhe të më kesh

Stand by me
By my side
And when she glimpsed at me
A feast for my eyes
A grace hand in mine
When she spoke to me,
If you are brave and
really love me
To my father ask my hand
And forever yours I'll be

A first documented print of the lyrics dates in the year 1909.²² The two earliest prints (1909 and 1912) specify also song provenance in the note “Mi erë të *La Petite Tonkinoise*”. This lacks in the four successive versions I have seen. By the conversations I had with the eldest musicians, none of them knew the original version, but supposed that the song could be either Greek or American.

Drenovarja is documented in *Këngë Korçare* repertoire in two different versions. Both are published in Kostaq Osmalli volume²³ and recorded from *Lira* group. Kostaq Osmalli nominated them as *Drenovarja* no. 1 and *Drenovarja* no. 2. This is the only piece that appears in two versions. A comparative analysis between them and *La Petite Tonkinoise* investigates the dialectic of continuity and active use and shows “at work” the operative devices of recreation-preservation-variation.

One version (nominated as *Drenovarja* no. 2 in Osmalli) retains many elements in common with the main source but with a rather anomalous structuring. The binary scheme of *Le Petite Tonkinoise* has been inverted. I will label B that part that stands for the refrain melody of *Le Petite Tonkinoise* and C the one that stands for the strophe of *Le Petite Tonkinoise*. To them has been added another part (A).

22. Sakoli 1909: 50-51. The lyrics in the recording are the same as those in the songbook.

23. Osmalli 1958: 39 (*Drenovarja* No. 1); 40-46 (*Drenovarja* No. 2)

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$\text{♩} = 80$

A

Një dit' shko' një dit' shko-va nga Dre - no-va, gje-ta një gje-ta një vaj-zë të re, ish' e

6

bu' ish e bu-kur ish' e mi - tur, du-ket ish du - ket ish - te fort e ngji - tur. Dhe më

10

tho' dhe më tho-të me zë plo-të, Zot që më Zot që më ve qaq e re, në do u në do u-dhë-në të

15

B

gjesh Aj me mu - a dhe mos qesh. Jam i lo - dhur tha - shë fa - re, moj dre-no -

20

va moj dre-no-va moj dre-no va-re, Rri-më pa - kë në lën - di - në të fla - sim për da - shu -

25

ri - në. Se ti zem - rë - në ma mo-re, moj ma-lë so moj ma-lë-so moj ma-lë so-re, me k'të

30

C

bu - ku-ri që ke ma bë re u-dhën ta le. Ndej-më pra-në dhe më nj'a-në më shtin-

36

te nga një vë-shtrim. U-në me syt' ment a ha-nja doç-kën ndë ti-met ja mba-nja, kur më tho-të me zë

43

plo - të në më do me nder si trim, tek im a-të aj të vesh, më kër - ko e të më kesh.

The melody line after Osmalli 1958: 40-46

So, there is an A-B-C form. Each of the parts is structured in two sections of complementary pairs and the overall structuring that comes out from the performance is A-B-C-A-C-B.

- A a - a1 (16 bars) (I-IV-V progression)
 B b – b1 (16 bars) (I-V-I progression)
 C c – c1 (16 bars) (I-V-I progression)

Standing to the recorded version, the B and C parts are performed from the choir, while the A part is performed in call-response sections where the male tenor soloist intones the upbeat-downbeat polka-military rhythm followed by the choir response in a variable imitation.

♩ = 80

Vocals
 Një dit shko-va nga Dre no - va Gje-ta një vaj-zë të

Tenor
 Bass
 Një dit' shko Gje-ta një

5
 Vox.
 re Ish' e bu-kur ish' e mi - tur Du-ket ish-të fort e ngji-tur. -

T
 B
 Ish' e bu Du-ket ish Dhe më

10
 Vox.
 - Dhe më tho-të me zë plo-të Zot që më ve ka-që re. Në do u-dhë-në të

T
 B
 tho Zot që më Në do u

15
 Vox.
 gësh, aj me mu - a dhe mos qesh.

T
 B

After Osmalli 1958: 40-46

In this configuration, to the A part may be attributed the verse status, while to the B and C (citations of the melody line of *La Petite Tonkinoise*) that of two different choruses in the song. It is an anomalous structure but the parts are strictly tight to each other from this small rhythmic polka cell, where the declamatory contour of the leading voice is grounded.



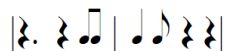
Relevance of these quasi-musematic qualities of the cell surfaces again when it comes to consider the other version of *Drenovarja*, (nominated in Osmalli as *Drenovarja* no. 1).

$\text{♩} = 120$

Një dit' shko-va nga___Dre - no - va një___dit' shko-, Një dit' shko-va nga___Dre-
no - va, gje - ta një vaj-zë të re, gje - ta një vaj-zë të re.____

After Osmalli 1958: 39

The piece is in 7/8 but although the cell “obeys” to a different distributive partition and is configured in a circular type of harmonic phrase (I-I), it preserves the same generative nucleus of upbeat-downbeat relation



There is an evident “shrink” in song-form, in which the melody contour seems to move around one single note-center, the A. The tune is a nine-bar stanza form, in which the verses are configured as two-line couplets, each one repeated twice. This form eliminates the “redundancy” of the previous version. It detaches only the first part (A). The melody line moves in the same

contour, configuring two call-response phrases, with the two cadence bars repeated twice. The strongest code in the syntactic construction of this song is the dance rhythmic one. The 7/8 version of the song is the one performed the most among *Këngë Korçare*. In some cases, they are performed together as one: the 7/8 version is followed by the B part of 2/4 polka.

The 7/8-dance meter in the formula (3+2+2) is the most frequent *aksak* rhythm in *Këngë Korçare*. What is appealing for all the cases when this change took place is the fact that once done, it has stability. This leads to assume that the this dance rhythm functions as a potential matrix in the structural elements of *Këngë Korçare*.

Narratives

In *Këngë Korçare* prevails the inclination to articulate a type of song that privileges a well-defined narrative. In the most part it is a love narrative, rendered verbally explicit from poetic structures. At the level of song syntax, the narrative is structured in regular phrasings, stanza and strophic divisions. The reiterative modes move towards the “implicit finality”²⁴ of verse-chorus (strofë-refren) or stanza-forms.

Drawing on the sentimental type of songs, Franco Fabbri distinguishes four stages: 1) the introduction (*prodimion*); 2) exposition of the facts (*dièghesis*); 3) the allusive argumentation, or reasoning (*pìstis*); and 4) and the peroration (*epìlogos*).²⁵ The following analysis shows how these stages produce one another in a continuum.

24. Fabbri 2001: 557

25 Fabbri 2001: 557

Në Kinema²⁶

Introduction (E-B-Em)

Em

Ishim një nat' në kinema

B

Në errësirë krah për krah

Am

Kur dolëm jasht' diçka më the

Em

Për dashurinë më bëre be

Em

Sa her kaloj në atë vend,

E7 Am

Gjithmonë e sjell ndërmend,

Em Am

Dhe qaj me lot, Në këtë bot'

Em

Ku është ku vajti ajo kohë.

E A

Ta dish ti, dhimbjen që kam

B E

Brenda në zemër.

A

Pikoj, gjith gjak edhe katran

B E

Edhe veten time se jap

E

Nanana, dole e pabesë

E B

E rremë qe ajo që më the

E

E rreme, e rreme qe

proöimion

One night in the cinema

In the darkness, side by side

While going out you turned

And promised forever love

Each time I go by that place

Always remember that night

And then cry, in this world

Where did that time go

If you would ever now

The pain in my heart

I am bleeding

Though I don't say anything

Nanana, you were unfaithful

Lies you told me

You told me lies

diëghesis

pistis

epilogos

²⁶ Mihallaq Andrea. "Në kinema." [Songs Collection from *Serenata Korçare-Programme*. Tape 1]. Radio Korçë, ca. 1994. Audiocassette Side A - Selection 1.

The piece is in a moderate slow beat, with a habanera rhythm played by guitars' accompaniments. Passages from one stage to another become explicit by certain traits. Distinct is the shift towards the major parallel that approaches the peroration final stage. Then the employment of a higher register of voice as climax. There are two of them: the first, in the stage of allusive argumentation (*pistis*), "highlighted" in the word *gjithmonë* (Gjithmonë e sjell ndërmend - Always remember) and the vowel-sound 'o'. The second is in the epilogue, when the piece enters the final stage. The vocalist reaches a gradual climax in articulating the word *ti* (Ta dish ti; If you would ever know), in the vowel-sound 'i'.

Këngë Korçare fit into a "narrative lyric" model based on the discursive type of repetition.²⁷ The "phrase structure repetition", on both the melodic level, and the harmonic-rhythmic progressions serves as primary model. On the basis of such balanced and proportioned rapports, scholars have introduced in the vocabulary of popular music studies Janos Marothy's designation of "bourgeois song"²⁸. This term can say certainly a lot about the historical dissemination of this song-type, its close relation to the bourgeoisie and western world and finally to its cosmopolitan belonging, beginning more especially in the mid nineteenth century. But when it comes to more specific cases such view may be too broad for analytical purposes.

The types of analysis above can be applied to transcriptions as they appear in Kostaq Osmalli collection, or to recordings, where the ear-trained ethno/musicologist discerns them. But when it comes to consider the anchoring in place of *Këngë Korçare* and the uses of mnemonic models as operative devices, other dynamics take place. This is something that suggests "paying attention to forms of knowledge implicit in performing and experiencing mu-

27. The analytical approach applied here refers to Richard Middleton (1990: 269-270).

28. Marothy 1974

sic.”²⁹ In other words, they “oblige” to think locally on how agents employ their music knowledge in experiencing and performing music.

The fact that *Këngë Korçare* are structured either as a verse-chorus form or as short stanza-form is related to forms of local music knowledge in employing teleological structures and repetitive discourses in song making. The two versions of *Drenovarja* can be considered as emblematic for illustrating this knowledge, evidencing a

[d]ialectic [...] between the collective and the individual, between tradition and innovation, between what is received from the community and what is supplied out of personal fantasy, in short, the blending of continuity and variation.³⁰

Melody

Up to now, I have discussed various traits in the repertoire: articulation of a song-type, rhythm, insights about creative mechanisms, form and structure. There is however one element - the melody - that I have continuously brought up in discussion but without providing any insights about it. The melody is integral to the analysis of *Këngë Korçare*: Vasil Ballauri speaks in terms of melodies that were appropriated; the musicians learn by heart melodies; I hear, read, and transcribe melodies. In other words, one can identify a spontaneous tendency “to draw out of a music some linear part [...], put words and sing.”³¹ The reason of avoiding discussing this distinctive trait of *Këngë Korçare* was for providing an approach that could explain the melody from a broader perspective, which is also the final step in the investigation of creative mechanisms.

The element that distinguishes melodies of *Këngë Korçare* most is accessibility and memorability. They have the capacity to be “absorbed” and become familiar. They are easy to memorize and to repeat; easy to be recognized from

29. Wolf 2009: 8

30. Lloyd 1967: 16-17

31. Stefani 1987: 23

the musicians and to be duplicated in secondary voices. According to Gino Stefani such qualities show a popular character of the melody. "Melody, is what people appropriate most in music" he says and the first distinguishable element of this melody is its "singable" quality. "Singable denotes first of all appropriation by perception, emotion and action."³² Stefani notes that the appropriation of a popular melody employs specific 'tactics'. Instead of simple elements like notes, intervals and single durations, Stefani highlights 'major units'. The latter operate on motivic structures, on schematic configurations, and on the preferentiality of melodic contours.³³

In this primarily spontaneous melodic creativity, the

common melodic competence does certainly identify a number of intermediate articulations with reference for instance, to verbal and poetic structures, or to the difference of roles within the singing or playing.³⁴

Here should be included the tendency of performers to adapt or invent new lyrics according to a specific imagery and the collective and communal character that shaped it as a part-song and in which secondary voices accompany the main line.

I am of the opinion that in *Këngë Korçare* the 'singable melody' played a greater part in people's taking control of the musical field. Korçarë appropriated the 'singable melody' and "did" a number of things: expressed emotions, communicated messages, identified themselves, and of course, constructed music pieces. The main traits of this 'singable melody' were the delimited vocal range, the use of minimal motivic units, tonal-modal functions, and the medium-slow beat usually performed in a relaxed manner. The 'singable melody' acted as central axis around which orbited the creative mechanisms be they musical or extramusical.

32. Stefani 1987: 22-23

33. See Stefani 1987 and more in particular pp. 23- 28.

34. Stefani 1987: 27

Chapter 9

Recording Legacy: Ethnographic Notes

In this chapter, I want to focus once again in *Serenata Korçare-programme* for some insights on how these recorded sources influenced the research and the narratives of this dissertation. The sound sources deserve attention because they “changed the reception of the sound event, in terms of “conditions and the place where it happen[ed]”¹, and to a certain extent, in terms of its nature. The recordings occupied a public *mediatic* space. Thus either songs or protagonists have been adapted to a “presentational performance” that imposed parameters in terms of arrangements, timbre, instrumentation, and singing styles. Lastly, the materials came to constitute a sort of song anthology, involving different generations of performers each with a different approach to the materials.

Selection, Reconstruction, Recording Setting

The selection of songs to be recorded was the stage in which the authors of the programme made their presence more felt. A greater role was bestowed

1. Cook et al. 2009: 1

upon the singer/soloist as the main protagonist. The materials have been ordered on 'standard' song-form basis. Grigor Çani mentioned lyric revisions, specifying however that this was not a procedure of editing their significance. The changes involved shortening the verses when they were too long or adjusting the material when lyrics from two different songs appeared in the same piece. This has been done by assistance of elder musicians. For what concerned the song, it seems that priority in selection was given to those pieces that already had preserved their integrity, compared to materials that were short or not complete.

The choices were very flexible when it came to the ensembles that were going to accompany the pieces. Arrangements or accompaniment was left to performers' choices. The professional background of the singers and the age factor seem to have greatly influenced the choices. Looking at the materials in the radio archive, the problem that arose was the lack of secondary information: there was an annotated info on the singers but not for the performers. For this, I have relied on the information of Grigor Çani, who covered and directed the musical part. We listened to the pieces and put down a list with the instrumental accompaniment (Appendix II).

All the recordings have been made in two track channels, the only storage system available. Along the main recording studio at the Radio Institution that stored the material on a *Studer* two track tape recorder, another supporting setting for recordings had been settled in the House of Culture, using a *Tesla* tape recorder. This setting served mostly for the arranged materials and was supervised from a sound technician. Although not a recording studio, the very division from the radio represented a shift from stationalized experiences and fitted in the emerging agencies of private studio music recordings.

The only established ensemble was the one directed by Abaz Hajro.² Grigor Çani called it *Pareja e vjetër*, or *Pareja e të vjetërve* (*Old Parè*), because it consisted by the elder generation of musicians that were active in the 1950s- 1960s.

2. For Abaz Hajro see Glossary and Chapter Eleven, *Spanja Pipa: A Case-Study*.

The leader was Abaz Hajro (accordion), also author of a number of songs. The ensemble counted Viktor Çani (contrabass), Pandi Tasellari (guitar), Nesti Tasellari (mandolin), Spanja Pipa, and Nusret Frashëri (vocalists). The other groups were not fixed. They did not change that much in terms of instrumental accompaniment. The prevalent timbres were the guitar, the mandolin, and the accordion. This represented the 'old-time' accompaniment style: plucked instruments covered the rhythmic beats, the harmonic progressions, and some secondary melodies; the accordion had a filling in function in the secondary lines and introductions.

The singers that came from recent musical experiences (1980s) applied 'modernized' arrangements, adding synthesized sounds. The latter were acquiring that period a wider usage as privately owned product. A reason for being so "welcomed" was also their all-in-one commodity service offering a variety of new timbres. The synthesizers employed in these recordings were the Casio CZ series, easy affordable because not very expensive. The timbres used came close to the acoustic sounds and were usually combined with them: woodwind synthesized timbres, or organ-like sounds enriched the layers of music texture with secondary melodic lines or filling in harmonies. Only one singer made the exception³ to this 'rule' and relied only on the synthesized sound accompaniment.

Goal of authors in *Serenata Korçare* was to store on tape a music performance as a ready-made product that could be used then by the radio broadcast. This implied a number of live performances that took place in a given moment of time, among which had been selected the best ones. As a matter of fact, this performance "generate[d] an acoustic, which [...] didn't necessarily exist in reality"⁴. There was abundance of reverberation effects and the synthesized sound. But is also true that these recordings were "iconic of life performance."⁵ The serenading male singers for example, maintained their usual

3. The singer was Ermira Babaliu. See Appendix II.

4. Cook et al. 2009: 4

5. Ibid. 4

format using only the guitar/s or a duo with mandolins. For the most part they played and sung with their own instruments and friends.

The radio programme confirmed the immanent aspiration of the musicians to hear the songs they had performed for so long in a presentational format. Besides enthusiasm in having such opportunity, this posed as well its own problematic, especially for what concerned the performance approach. Being faced with different opinions, I would like to comment on a discussion that took place during the program and that evidenced on the one hand the position of those that approached this songs with more pragmatic concerns and on the other, the ones that were more emotionally sensitive to the song.

The protagonists appeared particularly sensitive on questioning whether it was “a good” choice to introduce these arrangements in the songs, or not.⁶ Forms of self-affirmation and requisites to success detected the need of youngsters for a new approach to song performance sustaining the idea of renovation.⁷ The younger generation of stage performers saw the song as a form of self-affirmation, as a product that was supposed to have their individualized “stamp” on it. The elder generation of onstage musicians carried on the personal experiences and attributed to it a more symbolic value. Listening to their opinions during the programme, I had the idea that both ‘groups’ so to say exposed a situation of uncertainty in dealing with this ‘new’ condition of the repertoire and the ways that it was going to be handled now that the possibilities for public presentational performance were no more hindered. The uncertainty pertained of course the future developments, which are not going to be considered here.

6. The discussion takes place during the Second and Third Episodes of *Serenata Korçare-Programme*.

7. This attitude is going to have an important role in future dynamics, for ‘orienting’ Këngë Korçare into the broader frame of popular music and mediatization. The programme triggered attractiveness of *Serenata Korçare*. Lacking circumstances of copyright and authorship, the songs became *free* products for launching and re-launching careers of popular singers.

Voices and Protagonists (Prelude to the Two Case-Studies)

During research, the historical recordings of *Këngë Korçare* appeared very scattered and dispersed in time. I worked with a variety of recording standards, beginning with the “vintage” flavor of old 78rpms discs that dated from the 1910s, LPs and then the dusty reel-tapes of the Radio Archives, audiocassettes, and the latest digital formats in CD or Mp3, not including here my own fieldwork recordings.

This “view” I had on the historical sound music materials changed in the aftermath of research work. Once the materials “entered” the frame of documentation and came to be considered as objects of scholarly investigation, the basic recording sources turned out to be on the one hand those of *Lira* group and on the other those of *Serenata Korçare* programme.

Lira group needed a particular attention as a dominant ‘voice’ of *Këngë Korçare* – the focus of the next chapter. The programme *Serenata Korçare* concentrated different protagonists and therefore necessitated other “filters”. The male singers dominated but evoked however musical behaviors deriving from *parë/mbledhkë* nucleus. Among the female singers, the ones that had a direct connection with the repertoire were Spanja Pipa and Afërdita Zonja. The former had been a popular local singer of the 1950s and 1960s. The latter was a nationally renowned artist that in 1988 performed pieces from the repertoire in a successful recital concert. The peculiarity of Afërdita Zonja’s vocal timbre is to be found in its association with the voice of Tefta Tashko Koço.⁸ The recital brought her into the attention of the audiences because she performed a repertoire that up to that moment had been a “nomenclature” of *Lira* group.⁹

Although pretty acclaimed for this from the local audiences, Afërdita Zonja had however an indirect connection with the song practice. The case of Spanja

8. Tefta Tashko Koço was left out from the official culture up to the early 1970s. Pandi Bello in the biography on her described the case as *altum silentium* (Bello 2012: 176). This attitude derived probably by the critical positions that her brother Koço Tashko (an important member of the government and politician) had towards Hoxha’s regime, critics that brought to his imprisonment. The rehabilitation of the singer started in the 1970s (Bello 2012: 176-183).

9. See next chapter.

Pipa appeared more particular. She had been a stage artist but people identified her also as an active protagonist of the offstage settings. As the research on her went on, her presence became even more relevant and valuable. I realized that alongside *Lira* group case study, she needed a particular attention as protagonist of this repertoire.

Collaboration with Spanja Pipa engendered that type of relationship where fieldworkers and subjects of fieldworking “bring identities to an encounter and are cast [then] in a variety of roles.”¹⁰ This rendered obsolete at a certain point designations like fieldworker and subject of fieldwork, which was not the case with *Lira* group. The research had more ‘formal’ traits. I worked primarily with the historical sources and less with the protagonists.¹¹ In both case studies prevails however the imprint of this musical experience in the protagonists’ life.

10. Titon 2008: 33

11. From the historical members of the 1956 ensemble survive only two protagonists.

Two Case-Studies

Mikaela Minga

Chapter 10

Lira Group: An Ambivalent History

Lira came to prominence as an established ensemble of the House of Culture in the mid 1950s. The group took the name from a music society called *Lyra*, created in 1928.¹ It consisted of self-taught male singers active in the musical life of the city from the early 1900s.² The group was directed from a highly trained musician. According to an early appearance in a Newsreel, in 1957, the group counted ten singers and a *mandolinata* of four (two guitars, two mandolins).³ In the 1970s, the ensemble had been expanded including more than thirty singers; the *mandolinata* enlarged in number and in addition to the plucked instruments had been added an accordion, two or three flutes, and at times, a contrabass.⁴ After the 1990s, *Lira* group preserved its integrity as an ensemble of the House of Culture (that changed the name for Qendra Kulturore *Vangjush Mio* - Cultural center *Vangjush Mio*). They rehearse nowadays in their studio and continue to make public performances. From three

1. See Statuti i Shoqërisë Muzikale “Lyra”, formular më 17 Qershor 1928 (Lyra’s Music Society Book Statute, Formed in 17 June 1928). *Lira* is a modification of *Lyra* though both terms are employed. Various denomination were in use: *Grupi Karakteristik* (Characteristic group), *Grupi i Veteranëve* (Veteran’s group), *Grupi i Pleqve* (Elders Group), and *Grupi i këngëve karakteristike* (Group of characteristic songs). *Lira* and *Lyra* are used alongside *Grupi Karakteristik*. For congruence and compactness of the narratives, I am going to employ here ‘*Lira* group’ while commenting on each of them.

2. Nano 1967-1968; Bello 1985-1986; Mato 1997; Tërpini 2003

3. Zhurnal no. 13, 1957. <http://www.aqshf.gov.al/arkiva-17-4.html?movie=1813> (accessed 3 January 2013).

4. For details on that see Tërpini 2003

years, the Mayer institution stipulated a monthly financial support for each member. In 2008, the group released its first commercial album.⁵

Lira owed popularity and success to performances of *Këngë Korçare*. Jorgaq Nano, who took the lead from 1979 up to 2010, estimated that the repertoire consisted of circa 120 songs.⁶ The ensemble participated in numerous public events counting numerous radio performances. Among the most important sources to document this activity are to my knowledge, nearly seventy historical recordings made in Radio Tirana studios in between the 1950s and 1980s. Oral and written accounts retain that recordings have been done even previously⁷ but standing to my own research, the pieces to have been recorded at the radio and not simply live aired date from 1956.⁸ In addition to the recordings have been published two editions with collected songs.⁹

Lira has been conceived as a male ensemble. In the late 1980s, a few female voices entered the group but the male element has always been dominant and idiosyncratic. The singers were in their middle and late adulthood. The aging with the group inspired also a nickname: *Grupi i Pleqve* (*Elders Group*).¹⁰ Singers in *Lira* had self-trained vocal posture, they did not know musical notation and learned the songs 'by ear' (*me vesh*), or 'by heart' (*përmendësh*).¹¹ The figure of the artistic director has been crucial in the organization of the ensemble and amongst them the most prominent role goes to Kostaq Osmalli.

This ensemble consisted of pitched male voices. For defining their roles, singers indicate the western music male voice ranges: bass, baritone, and ten-

5. Lira Group *Kori Lyra-Korçë*, Vol. I. (Recorded in Korçë by "Akustika" studio, in 2005). Tiranë: Eurostar [no serial number], 2008.

6. Jorgaq Nano. *Lira's* music director 1979-2010. Personal Conversation. December 2012. The group appears as well in Adela Peeva's documentary *Whose is this song*. The piece that she made the focus of her inquiry is not however a standard in their repertoire. It was performed by a female singer artist, now member of the group.

7. Fori Tërpini a member of the group notes in his book memoir (2003: 89-90; 100-101) that the ensemble did recordings in Radio Tirana, in the year 1938.

8. Radio Tirana. [No Date]. *Erotika e Jugut* [Notes with Song Recordings from ca. 1950]. Handwritten Material. I estimate that most of the recordings dated in between 1956 up to the late 1960s. This is based on the fact that nearly two thirds of the recordings I listened to are accompanied with *mandolinata* ensemble. Fewer pieces are with the large ensemble that accompanied the group from the late 1960s.

9. See Osmalli 1958; 1972.

10. Nano 1967-1968: 52

11. Ina Osmalli. Personal Conversation, August 2012. Jorgaq Nano. Personal Conversation, December 2012.

or. The consideration of *Lira* as a choir (kor) is common. The ensemble did not follow a “classical” choir format but functioned as a multipart singing experience: a part-song where the secondary voices doubled the melody with mellifluous and tuneful intervals. *Lira* can be defined as an euphonious type of ensemble. In the recordings there are songs performed by the whole ensemble or soloist tunes shaped as call-response models: the soloist sings the strophe, or a small section of it, and the group responds in chorus. Singers use mainly the middle registers of voice; they perform usually in a slow, or moderate slow beat, with controlled voice intensity and have a “relaxed” vocal production (“këndojnë shtruar” or “ia marrin shtruar”).

Lira’s timbre owes a great part to the plucked sonority of *mandolinata* ensemble, consistent principally of guitars and mandolins. Similar euphonious principles work also for the accompaniment. The *mandolinata* sustain the singing melody with regular bass lines and simple harmonies. The harmonic progressions are played usually from guitar arpeggios while the mandolins have more a “decorative” function, playing motives, and intervening in the moments of passage.

Lira’s established a standard in performance of the songs. Thanks to its continuous and unchanged rendition the songs became “signature tunes”¹² for the group. This status was shaped in concomitance with the cultural constructs that operated in the socialist culture. Two aspects become relevant for discussion about the group at this point: first, *instrumentality*, that is, the fact that their artistry had been managed to “yoke to [...] a variety of ends”¹³ and secondly, *representation*.

In the sources that document *Lira*’s activity there is a strong emphasis in the renowned and celebrative traits. They praise *Lira* as promoter of national culture. Korçë remained however, core of group’s activity; the place where the

12. Feld, Fox, Porcello, and Samuels 2004: 338

13. Berger, Del Negro 2004: 20

repertoire was praised and where the pieces acquired a special place in people's collective memory.¹⁴

Different generations of Korçarë have grown up listening to *Lira* ensemble; learning and singing the pieces that everyone in the city shared as *Korçare*. A pertinent aspect that becomes evident in the affection people have for this ensemble in comparison to the repertoire not belonging to *Lira* is the transection between a local identity and the national imagination. Alongside, there is number of overlapping and sometimes dichotomist aspects that interplay: institutionalized and spontaneous forms of organization; "from above" and "from below" policies; national and nationalist¹⁵ music discourses; collective and official memory.¹⁶ What all this cases highlight is the active cultural work behind this group, which I am going to discuss in this chapter.

Attributes and Intricacies

In the earliest Radio Programs published in a local paper can be found a section titled *Këngë të Vjetra Korçare (Old Korçare Songs)*.¹⁷ Dating much approximately a decade earlier than *Lira* official formation, I asked about this the then sound technician Vasil Dishnica. He answered that the songs were broadcast live either by a group, or from well-known male soloists but there was no permanent ensemble. The broadcast necessities however seem to have required a form of communal designation for the pieces. Pirro Katro, speaker at the Radio from 1950 to 1954 commented an internal discussion on the term. He mentioned an opinion exchange with a colleague on what name had to be adopted for these tunes, acknowledging that the musics were in some cases

14. It can be said that almost "a century of recorded music" (Day 2000) circulates in the audio supporters containing *Lira's* historical recordings. Once "someone" managed to store from reel-to-reel tapes to other support devices, a great part of these pieces has circulated in different sound supporters, from LPs, cassettes, CD, and Mp3. The recent dissemination does not have any commercial project on the background. Owning, collecting, and sharing these recordings transpires an affective care that web resources have facilitated more. Lacking any copyright issues, many pieces can be found on YouTube, as privately edited video materials with comments and photographs.

15. Bohlman 2004: 81-160

16. Abrams 2010: 101. I have discussed on official memory in Chapter Three.

17. "Program i Radio Korçës [Radio Korça daily program schedule]. *Përpara*, 27 November 1948: 4

adapted by well-known songs. “Këngë të vjetra korçare (old korçare songs) seemed to work well, he said, since the tunes were sung from long, so we kept it.”¹⁸

It is clear to them that this music did not represent a ‘traditional’ music, although they wanted to be perceived as such. In the local verbalizing,¹⁹ the designation of *old* seems to have represent the “compromise” bounding together the place-oriented perspective (*vendi*), that is, Korçë (the ‘container’ of this practice) and the attribute *Korçare*. The songs became (supposedly) *old* (*të vjetra*), an idea of remoteness that could render a quasi authentic quality. It was a viable designation for that period considering that the collection of Kostaq Osmalli published in 1958 was entitled *Këngë të Vjetra Korçare*.²⁰ A further detail in rendering the idea of *old* is anonymity. Although authors of some songs were known, there are no references to any name.

Another attribute is ‘characteristic’ (*karakteristike*). It prevails as a wide accepted designation: ‘grupi karakteristik’ (characteristic group) that successively includes ‘këngë karakteristikë’ (characteristic songs). When considering *Këngë Korçare*, Eno Koço maintains it and explains the usage with the ways that apparently foreign expressive traits can be emplaced and become “characteristic”, or “distinctive” to a group of people.²¹ The wide use of this term poses however certain questions, especially for its close relationship with the promotion of *Lira* group. Tagging a part of the urban song as ‘characteristic’ is in my opinion, an invention. The term is integral for shaping the representational traits of this ensemble and its symbiosis with the urban practice.

The Characteristic Group of Korçare Songs includes in its repertoire the love for the life, for the city, for the homeland, for the beautiful Korçare girl. In these songs one can hear the joy, youth optimism, the love for the homeland. Notes of mordent but light humor, sprightly irony of our city’s people are integral to these pieces. Before entering the concert stages, or being recorded on discs, these songs have resonated in the city’s weddings, in the pic-

18. Pirro Katro. Video-interview by Josif Minga and Ylli Trajçe. Korçë, 20 February 2012.

19. Blum 2000: 113-114.

20. Osmalli 1958

21. Koço 2003: 29

rics at the woods, near the fountains, under the windows [...] These songs are a part of the city's heart. From them the group has included in its repertoire up to now more than 65.²²

Characteristic enters the vocabulary by means of *Lira*, "replacing" *old* (e vjetër). The second, revised edition of the song collections validates the direct link between the songs and the group. This edition was published in 1972, on occasion of the ensemble's anniversary celebration. It is titled *Këngë të Kënduara nga Grupi Karakteristik i Korçës* (*Tunes Sung from Korça's Characteristic Group*).²³

Two elements emerge through this cultural work: exclusivity and distinction. 'Karakteristik' enhances the exclusive trait of this ensemble and at the same time its distinction from other forms of song making. This conception is strongly bound with the national imaginary secluding the experience from any possible interconnection with mandolinata based ensembles in Greece or similar euphonious groups in neighboring countries and distinguishing it in the Albanian music context.

Lira's Members: Continuity and Change

A few years ago, one of the singers of the group published a book with memoirs and autobiographical accounts related to their activity. The narratives provide a helpful insider's feedback. They bring the reader close to the way in which a member perceived his experience within the group from the 1920s (when, properly speaking, *Lira* did not exist) up to recent times. One of the first elements that can be noted is that Fori Tërpini (the author of the memoir) describes the 1930s musical activity they did as an itinerary that found its final conclusion in *Lira* ensemble. He proceeds then by praising

22. "Grupi Karakteristik i Këngëve Korçare grumbullon në repertorin e tij dashurinë për jetën, për qytetin, për atdheun, për vajzën e bukur korçare, për këngët e tij ndihet gëzimi, optimizmi i rinisë, atdheadashuria e flaktë, aty këtu, nëpër njërën këngë apo tjetër, tingëllon humori i hollë thumbues, ironija e lehtë e njerëzve të qytetit tonë. Këto këngë kanë kumbuar, para se të hynin në sallat e koncerteve apo të inçizoheshin në diske, në dasmat e qytetit, në pikniket nën hijen dhe afër burimeve të pyjeve, nën dritaret e ballkonet, kur mbi qytet ndrit hëna e argjëntë. Një pjesë e zemrës së qytetit tone janë pra këto këngë karakteristike, nga të cilat, gjer tani, në repertor grupi ka më shumë se 65." In Shtëpia e Kulturës dhe Krijimtarisë Popullore. *Grupi i Këngëve Karakteristike Korçare – Koncert* [Concert Program of Korça's Characteristic Songs' Group], Korçë, ca. 1960.

23. Osmalli 1972

largely the celebratory character and the anniversaries. The book's title *Djelmuria Korçare që Këndoi "Dua më Shumë Shqipërinë"* (*Korça's Youngsters Sung "I love Albania the Most"*) indicates the powerful patriotic sensibility and the national imagery.²⁴

What I am suggesting here is that the members were as well carriers and producers of *Lira* ambivalences and this transpires in a first place, by reading through the books' lines. Fori Tërpini uses mostly the plural, as if speaking in name of his colleague/friends. The narratives display how eradicated is in him the representative trait in interpreting *Lira's* activity and how instrumental have been they in shaping such representation either for their/his own requisites or for the audiences. *Lira* centrality appears influential as well in "organizing" the memories and the bonds with *Këngë Korçare*, something that pertains to the moment when this ensemble did not exist as such but instead there were only communal organizations or societies. Thinking in terms of a post and pre *Lira* period can be useful at this point for describing some issues.

The spontaneous creativity of the first half of the twentieth century belonged to a growing urban middle class consistent of handcrafters, artisans, small merchants, and accountants. Their agencies rested greatly in the male companionship organization, the *Djelmuria Korçare*²⁵ as they choose to call also one of the numerous artistic societies of this period. *Lira* group was constituted by some of these representatives. Yet, at the time when the ensemble came to prominence, the members had already entered the middle or late adulthood and although had the same professions backgrounds, were now state-workers.

The spontaneous format of their societies was distinguished for the energies but also for the limits in providing enduring and well-defined artistic projects. Yet, in the aftermath the latter have been conceptualized as a 'movement', a music and artistic movement (*lëvizja muzikore/artistike*)²⁶, presum-

24. Tërpini 2003. For the song *I love Albania the most* see also Chapter Seven, pp. 127-132.

25. *Djelmuria Korçare* (*Korçare Male Youth*) was an artistic society founded in 1925. (Mato 1997: 110; Bello 1985-1986: 28).

26. See Bello 1985-1986; Nano 1967-1968

ing some sort of organized agencies that preceded the achievement of socialism. Alongside, the terms 'progressive' (përparimtar) and 'amateur' (amatore) qualified further the imagery of this movement and its "humble" but acclaimed origins. The companionship basis were re-modeled by a populist symbolic inspired by the choir and mass idea. This elucidates how from a small group appearing in the 1957 Newsreel, a performance that I would describe as very confidential, *Lira* became a larger choral ensemble of nearly thirty members.²⁷

Articulation of the song they performed in the early twentieth century was a new expressive form they have been identified with. This depended on their immediate living world and on the capacity to produce and consume it as part of it. Either the patriotic and homeland sensibility, or the intimate serenading and street practices were the articulation of a form of interactivity where the national imaginary entwined with youth, class, and religious identities. Interestingly, this youth energies have been "transferred", so to say, to younger generations who stepped into similar spontaneous forms of song-making in the successive years. *Lira* members worked instead for constructing a *representation* of their own youth song practice, a representation filtered out in the context of socialist culture and its aesthetic to the point to inspire a monolithic idea associated with one name: *Lira*.

Memory and Remembering

If one visits nowadays the rehearsing-studio of the group situated in the Cultural Center "Vangjush Mio", he or she would find besides a venue for rehearsing, an iconographic setting that evokes the historical life of the ensemble. On the walls of this studio are hung many photographs, portraits depicting the musicians in different events from the 1920s and on. An apposite

27. This number is an estimation based on a concert broadcast of TVSH (Albanian Television). *Koncert i Grupit Karakteristik - Korçë*. Music director: Jorgaq Nano; Directed by Osman Mula. Tiranë: TVSH, ca. 1982. (I am thankful to Rropi Tabaku for the material).

frame is dedicated to the artistic directors; another to the initial nucleus in the 1950s. Then still moments from concerts, anniversaries, and celebrations. The connection with a historic imaginary and the reifying of the past is intrinsic to the group existence, beginning with the first public appearances.

The voice over of the Newsreel, for example, describes them as “grupi karakteristik i veteranëve” (characteristic group of the veterans).²⁸ A more detailed description can be found in this passage from a concert program in which I have italicized words that convey the idea:

The artistic traditions and the contribute that the city of Korçë has given for the *flourishing* of *Culture and Arts* are well-known in our Republic.

The group of Korçare Characteristic Songs is a *living evidence* of this traditions in the field of vocal art. We can just say that the *younger member of this group is not older than forty years, while the veteran is more than 73 years old*. If you ask the latter when he started his artistic activity for the first time, he will mention the year 1905.²⁹

The point here redirects the attention towards a previous discussion. In chapter three I have pointed out different aspects concerning Korçarë experiencing of time and place: “official memory”, symbolism, the cyclical perception of the past, and the discourse on social and monumental time.³⁰ These aspects permeate *Lira*’s existence as well and in many levels: first, they permeate the group as a construct; then the singing experience, and finally, *Lira*’s songs.

Lira reified a historic imaginary, which integrates the ensemble into the “set of memories” that praised Korçë as a cultural capital. *Lira* commemorative activity were constant: it was a “living” ensemble that celebrated and evoked the past. The continuous celebrations of group’s anniversaries that took place, “coincidentally”, when there was an important national festivity were part of

28. Zhurnal no. 13, 1957. <http://www.aqshf.gov.al/arkiva-17-4.html?movie=1813> (accessed 3.1. 2013).

29. “Në të gjithë Republikën tonë njihen mire traditat artistike dhe kontributi që ka dhënë e jep qyteti i Korçës për lulëzimin e Artit dhe Kulturës. Grupi i Këngëve Karakteristike Korçare është një dëshmi e gjallë e këtyre traditave në fushën e artit vokal. Mjafton të përmendim se më i riu pjesëtar i këtij grupi ka një moshë jo më të vogël se prej 40 vjetësh kurse veteran i grupit i ka kapërxyer të 73 vjetët. Po ta pyesësh këtë të fundit për kohën kur ka filluar të zhvillojë për herë të parë aktivitetin artistik do të zërë në gojë vitin 1905. In Shtëpia e Kulturës dhe Krijimtarisë Popullore. *Grupi i Këngëve Karakteristike Korçare – Koncert*” [*Concert Program of Korça’s Characteristic Songs’ Group*], Korçë, ca. 1960.

30. See Chapter Three.

this official memory. On these occasions participated many official representatives and regime bureaucrats. There is then a subtler dimension that fueled the status, evoked first of all by Enver Hoxha. His predilection and paternal attitudes towards the group members come out in his memoir book *Vite të Rinisë (Youth Years)*³¹, but also in the “intimate” care he showed for them when visiting Korçë.

In reviewing all the aspects discussed in this case study my last consideration go to the bodily practices for the transmission of memories in a society. Memory is sedimented or amassed in the body and transpires through the *incorporating* type of social practices and the *inscribing* one. In the *incorporating* type are to be found practices articulated in the presence of someone: a smile, a handshake, or words spoken.

[What] we address are all messages that a sender or senders impart by means of their own current bodily activity, the transmission occurring only during the time that their bodies are present to sustain that particular activity. Whether the information imparted by these actions is conveyed intentionally or unintentionally, and whether it is carried by an individual or a group, [these] actions [are] incorporated.³²

In the inscribing practices one has to include the agencies dedicated to storing and retrieving information: from “print, encyclopedias, indexes, photographs, sound tapes, computers, all require that we do something that traps and holds information.”³³

Lira “acted” by way of *incorporating* and *inscribing* practices. The memorization of a cultural specific behavior - in this case, *singing* as a body technique and singing these songs in particular - was pivotal in *Lira's* existence. What further underlined this condition was the persistence and reiteration of what has been incorporated: *Lira* performed continually only these songs to the point that they gained the attributes of a ‘customary’ and formal presentational performance. When the members passed away, they were replaced with others preserving anyway the same frame. The transcriptions and more espe-

31. Hoxha 1988: 83-84. See also Tërpini 2003: 112-113

32. Connerton 1989: 72-73

33. Connerton 1989: 73

cially the recordings transposed the incorporated practice to a 'literate' level and to the inscribed condition. And once done with it, the practice became "unalterably fixed, the process of its composition being definitively closed." In the case when "the memories of a culture begin to be transmitted mainly by the reproduction of their inscriptions rather than by 'live' tellings, improvisation becomes increasingly difficult and innovation is institutionalized."³⁴

By means of both incorporating and especially inscribing practices, *Lira's* songs elicit an interpretative line that can go alongside the one of Michael Herzfeld's about social and monumental time. The group "experienced" a time 'monumentalization'. It operated as a consequence of the same forces that turned the houses into museums, or those that turned places in "lieux de memoire"³⁵. *Lira's* songs interrupted the connection with the social time and more especially with a corpus of *Korçare songs* that elder singers recall to have been practiced alongside but that remember only few melodies. What socialist culture and the social actors engaged with *Lira* made was a live but "frozen monument" of a musical experience constrained and entangled within its "imagined" past.

34. Connerton 1989: 75

35. Nora 1989



Figure 25. Members of *Lyra* society in 1927. Among them is also Vasil Ballauri (the first in the sitted row, left.) I am thankful to Ilia Ballauri for this photograph.



Figure 26. The earliest members of *Lira* group and the director Kostaq Osmalli in 1957. (The photograph is a snapshot from *Zhurnali* no. 13).



Figure 27. *Lira* group and the director Kostaq Osmalli in a concert performance, ca 1975. (Cultural Center Archive)



Figure 28. *Lira* group, mid 1980s. (Cultural Center Archive)

Chapter 11

Spanja Pipa: A Woman in Song

Spanja Pipa (b.1938) started working as a professional artist in the city's theater Çajupi in 1960. She was born in Korçë in a lower middle class family. Her father was a shoemaker and her mother a housewife. She started working at the Handicraft Cooperative factory (Koopertiva e Artizanatit) while completing the high school studies. Here she joined the music ensemble. In the years 1958-1959 she was a singer in *Estrada e Ushtarit* (Soldier *Estrada* Revue), together with future prominent Albanian artists.¹ She toured with them until 1960 when she was employed as a professional female singer-actress in Korça's revue troupe, a section of the city's theater.² In her career she covered different roles in parodies, revue shows, and comedies, combining almost always acting with singing. Working as professionist (profesioniste) stage artist was the most acclaimed status an artist could have in the then Albanian society on both the financial level and on a professional background.

The most active years in her artistic career were the 1960s as a singer-actress in the *Estrada* revue. Able to combine in an effective way singing with

1. The troupe gave shows for the military basis, especially for those situated at the borders. Agim Krajka (b. 1937) an important figure of Albanian light music was among the artists of the troupe.

2. The Theater institution had two troupes: the first staged theatre works (drama and comedies); the second had a populist character and staged usually light spectacles such as revues or vaudevilles.

acting, she approached the audiences with that “equivocal nature of the comic”³, as Bergson said. Alongside, can be counted also various concert performances and radio broadcast.

In 1968 the troupe was renovated. Younger singers and actors entered in. She appeared less on stage and chose instead to serve as assistant in the theater wardrobe for retiring in the year 1985, aged less than 50 years.⁴ In 1993, Spanja Pipa recorded three songs in the Radio programme *Serenata Korçare* being among the representative artists of its revival.

Two moments should be considered at this point, for better introducing her profile: first, the activity of *Estrada Revue* and second, the role of a prominent musician of the 1960s: Abaz Hajro.

The ‘Estrada’ Revue

Estrada revue was established in the year 1960. It was a local version of the central troupe created in Tirana, in 1952. It had the format of a revue show with music, sketches, songs, dances, and parodies.⁵ The name *Estrada* is French (*estrade* means platform, stage) but the institutionalized format was a Soviet import. Shows of *Estrada Revue* in Korçë were usually inspired from everyday actualities - with the limits that this word implies in a totalitarian regime. Each show was previously staged appositely to a commission, consistent of representative bureaucrats of the Party Committee, members of the working class, and an employ from the theater.⁶ Spanja Pipa recounts that only after their “evaluation” whether all the pieces, songs and sketches were “appropriate” the troupe proceeded with the show.

The surviving archival materials about the activities are scattered. The most reliable sources have been personal archives from the employers, few show

3. Bergson 2008 [1911]: 66

4. The socialist system provided sustainable policy incomes regarding singer soloists like her, so she could give up work earlier.

5. Vlashi 2008: 617-618. I am thankful to Ardian Vehbiu for the comprehensive explanation of *Estrada* revue.

6. Spanja Pipa. Personal Conversation, July 2012.

programs, and oral accounts. The spectacles had regular show times based on the scheduled plans (plani). Apparently there was not much interest in documenting them systematically. More relevance had the “archeological” values displayed by the construction of a small museum that had photographs from the shows, portraits of protagonists, and a few show programs.⁷ One of the most valuable sources for retrieving information was the personal diary of Viktor Çani. He wrote down his stage music experience starting from the year 1948. As an active member of *Estrada* revue (1960-1967) he scheduled in details the shows where he was part. They were weekly based. The Revue was supposed to give various ‘shows for’: for the pupils, for the cooperative, and for the women. The members also toured in rural areas for “entertaining” the villagers and the working classes. There was then a main revue program that had a different plan program. The latter consisted of two or three shows in a week and if the show was successful, it was repeated more times.

The *Estrada* revue included seven-eight songs in each show. There was a music director who covered the musical part (composition of the various pieces, and direction). Photographs from the 1960s show an instrumental ensemble mostly consistent of accordion (the director), clarinets, saxophones, trumpets and trombones, contrabass, and drums. Randomly were included violins and piano (Figure 32). Successful song from the show were then broadcast at the radio. In the year 1967, after a competition in Vlorë⁸, the troupe members were suspended and assigned to work in the factory (punë prodhuese). Afterwards, the troupe’s members changed.⁹

The popularity of *Estrada* revue troupe in this period was an outcome of two main features: first, the fortunate combination of agencies coming from

7. In the recent twenty years, these spaces have lost completely their function. Due to the lack of policies in these matters the materials have been misused. The materials once belonging to the Museum have been placed in a room that serves as archive of some sort, but without any form of cataloguing.

8. Vlorë is a city in the southwestern part of Albania. The competition was an artistic event where the revues from all the country competed together.

9. There are various and evasive comments on the case. Some pertained to the fact that the troupe got a bad evaluation due to the low quality of the show. Others regarded the fact that the artists sang songs in Greek language during the stay there, which ideological and political implications. This represented also a period of change. Many artists of the older generation were being substituted by younger ones. The situation necessitates therefore more investigation before coming into reliable conclusion.

talented and inspired young artists (poets, musicians, singers, and actors) that congregated in their work together and second, the quasi liberal reality that made the show a successful stage for many artists. Most of them were acclaimed on a local level and some on a national one.

Abaz Hajro

The name of Abaz Hajro (1930-1996)¹⁰ appears very frequently in conversations with Spanja Pipa and with musicians of his generation. A prolific songwriter and accordion player he seemed to have exerted a particular influence on the musicians and artists he worked with - Spanja Pipa notwithstanding. The re-gathering in the radio programme 1993 displayed once more the type of congregation these artists had due to his presence.

Abaz Hajro came from the Gyptian *Hajro* family, a prominent Master musicians family in Korçë. He attended western oriented musical education and did not play *Saze* renditions. He had violin courses and became known as an accordion player in live performances and radio broadcast from the early 1950s. Hajro worked as a music director and composer in *Estrada* revue troupe from 1960 to 1968. After the troupe was renovated, he was appointed to work in a shoe factory. He made then only sporadic and informal performances in weddings, or parties with close friends.

To my knowledge, the pieces that survive from the entire corpus attributed to Abaz Hajro are reduced compared to estimations given from his colleagues.¹¹ Evident in the surviving pieces was the split between the ones that presumably were addressed to the stage official shows, and therefore had to obey to certain models and those that have not been performed officially but

10. See also Glossary.

11. Klito Fundo (2009: 92-93) estimates nearly one hundred songs. The same number has been pointed out to me in the oral accounts of his colleagues. The recordings I checked in Radio Korçë archive have been nearly twenty. In his family archive among the various experts and manuscripts there were nearly twenty songs. Abaz Hajro had a very difficult personal life from the 1970s and on. His family did not show much interest in preserving the materials. I am very thankful however to his son Ylli Ibrahimimi for helping me with the materials he inherited from his father.

circulated in Korçë. The first recordings of this 'latent' corpus dated in 1993. Six pieces have been performed in Radio Korça programme. Abaz Hajro arranged the materials and played along with his accordion. The programme was one of his last public appearances.

The historical recordings appealed to models of Albanian light music in that period.¹² Referential for him seems to be the style of Agim Prodani¹³. Customarily in the handwritten music can be found the tribute type of songs: for the Party, for the cooperative. The songs performed offstage are all love ballads. Two of the members, Spanja Pipa and Viktor Çani underlined that these songs were not created with the idea to be performed for the audiences, and that they were conscious about that from the beginning. They described these pieces to have been written and sung in informal contexts, among each other. "We used to perform during pauses, or in free-time gatherings."¹⁴ Both musicians used the same expression in describing the situation: "These were songs we made for us" (*Ishin për veten tone, për qejfin tonë*).

The songs of Abaz Hajro were perceived as an integral part of the urban repertoire. The reasons for that are to be found first in the type of song, a sentimental ballad with very intimate verses from local poets and second in his accordion playing. The musicians that commented about him used to describe his performances through a web of metaphors that emphasized the melodious and cantabile style in accompanying the pieces. What seems to have distinguished this artist so particularly was his ability to impart through his playing a sonorousness of the accordion timbre that intertwining with the singing practice in the city conveyed a sense of place and intimacy.

12. Me Artistët dhe Krijuesit tanë. *Bisedë me muzikantin Abaz Hajro*. [Artists and authors; Conversation with Abaz Hajro]. Radio programme by Tonin Frroku. [Not catalogued Archival Reel Tape]. Radio Korçë, 1994.

13. Agim Prodani (1928-1989) is an Albanian songwriter, active between 1950s-1960s. He inculcated in the Albanian light music, dance rhythms like tango, mambo. His songs were popularized as radio broadcast pieces. The performers were female singers active in Tirana state revue and in Radio Tirana. The musical style of Agim Prodani was popular.

14. Viktor Çani. Personal Conversation, July-August 2012.

With Spanja Pipa

Spanja Pipa re-appeared in the radio programme reviving mainly Abaz Hajro's songs, which she was known for performing – on and offstage. The revue on the other hand had a central part in her life. The most perspicuous elements that emerged from the research on her were the presentational capacities acquired from this period and the capability to preserve this imagery in informal and participatory settings. Spanja Pipa continued to sing this repertoire in informal settings. Our conversations evidenced that singing made a constant practice in her life. The offstage type of activities covered different levels: from “special events”, such as parties, celebrations to more informal get together experiences with close friends, up to those that can be described as very intimate events of the “the unmarked world”¹⁵. Alongside the repertoire she acquired as stage artist, she appropriated many pieces from the urban repertoire.

An initial stimulus for this seems to have been her father, a very special presence in her life. He was known for singing *Këngë Korçare* with *parë*. Then she continuously evoked the serenading “tradition” of male youngsters and recalls to have learned many songs from them. There is a strong sensibility of courtship components when she comments about this practice. Yet, what seems to determine the “effective” connection is her status as a stage singer and actress. By way of this status she conveys the idea to *take part*, that is, to get directly involved in this sound event and not remain a passive listener. These points open a multipart discussion that implicates performance, participation, concepts of the self and individual identity, and finally relations between the past and acts of remembering. It would be conspicuous to begin with the latter two aspects - the past and acts of remembering – since they orient the research.

It should be acknowledged that although I was working with a person in real time, the frame where we continuously emerged ourselves was the past;

15. Berger, Del Negro 2004: 16

Spanja Pipa's intentional remembering of her past. Yet, it was also present, in the sense that remembering displayed the events in a dimension that was not the past. My presence in her life, displayed that reliving the past meant for her "*actively re-entering* the 'no longer living worlds' not just as they were - which is, strictly speaking, impossible - but as they are now rememberable in and through reminiscence."¹⁶

Stimulant in remembering for her was the reminiscence mode, that is, "*remembering with others*."¹⁷ The "other" does not presume only my presence but her being with others: friends, people she sung, people she heard singing and reminisced about music. When this happened, it did not imply only singing. On the contrary, in these encounters they did not usually perform as many songs as they told me they knew. Yet, they commented on those that performed: on the lyrics, on places of performance, on impressions related to that period. Such gatherings represented at the same time the possibility to better grasp the status Spanja Pipa had as popular stage artist.

I noticed that the pieces she had appropriated came from the period of her youth or young adulthood. This moment, as Simon Frith has pointed out, represents in many cases the most intense period for becoming attached to certain musics that remain with you for the whole life.¹⁸ The 1950s-1960s serve as a sort of epicenter for her cyclical perception: she usually distinguishes "old" songs (*këngë të vjetra*) because coming from a previous time, or songs that "appeared later" (*dolën më vonë*). Likewise, she identifies and speaks more in detail for the protagonists of this period and is less informed with the generation that appeared after the 1970s.

When it comes to talk about the repertoire she performed as a stage artist, she is more evasive about it and describes them in terms of something that had to be performed. Initially, I read this as a self-conscious act, considering

16. Casey 2000: 107. His Italics. I am drawing here mainly on Edward Casey's phenomenological study of remembering. The reason is because he offers a very detailed descriptive look on what one does when he or she remembers departing from commonplace settings and everyday experience, which was the context of this research.

17. Casey 2000: 105. His italics

18. Frith 1987: 133-150.

that she knew that we were focused on *Këngë Korçare*. But once our working together became more spontaneous and unstructured, I perceived this as related to her self-presence in these events, in the sense of an *active* presence, a *taking part*. What she has actively experienced as a singer and actress - her revue or theater roles, revue songs - is what she describes in details. Among this “remembering-what”, the songs have come to occupy the most significant part.

Relation to these songs is a way of extending to the present the “pastness”¹⁹ of her music experience. This comes out in two ways: one is the speech part, that is, the talk about the pieces and the explanations she likes to give. The other is the song, in which remembering generates performance. Being either with someone that sung along, or alone, performance of these songs does not emerge as a simple repetition but as a creative revival of her music experience. At best, this aspect transpired during the recording session (see below) but to a lesser degree, this was something that she articulated also in various occasions of working together

A Complex Profile

Spanja Pipa was not a national artist. She belongs to that group of performers whose activity had been concentrated within the local reality. She did not enter the national circuit of music production in spite of operating in the *Es-trada* revue circuit and its Tirana-national models. Yet, her everyday life was - and still is - closely bound with Korçë. This condition prompted me to investigate the ways in which Spanja Pipa’s self-experiences in the ‘real’ life and in her ‘artistic’ realm had been fused with the system of values of society she was part.

In commenting about the singing tradition in the city, she tended to clarify frequently that she “did not go serenading” because this was not something

19. Casey 2000: 39-41

women were supposed or could do. She learned the songs that circulated because she liked and wanted to sing them “for her own” (për veten e saj). Such consideration does not “license” this dimension to be only her “own”. Spanja Pipa sung and performed these pieces in different settings that were not the street, and (with the exception of one case that I am going to mention below), not the stage. This “own” dimension however is shared with someone, while her non-female serenading conceptions seems to be contradicted by this particular episode from her acting experience.

She has many photographs in her living space. One of them caught my eye because was positioned in a shelf that had an immediate discernibility one first entered her apartment. The photograph shows Spanja Pipa holding a guitar while being surrounded by four male figures. The details of faces and expressions display a singing pose. Looking at this position, I supposed that this photograph had certain relevance for her and I was not wrong (Figure 33). The photograph was taken during a stage performance of the drama *Era e lartësive* (1974-1975)²⁰, one of her last performances on stage. She was chosen for the role because it required a female protagonist that sung and played the guitar. The script did not specify which song and she recommended to the stage director the piece *Këndo kitar’ me mua* (*Sing guitar with me*). It was a sentimental ballad she had heard from serenaders. For the case, she changed the gender roles in the lyrics:

Oh këtë dritare, sa her’ e kam par’ Hënën lozonjare, dhe un’ me kitar’	Oh, so many times I have seen this window The playful moon The guitar and me
Këndo kitar’ me mua, Po djalin mos ma zgjo, Fli sonte ti me mua	Sing guitar with me But don’t wake my boy Sleep you with me

20. Namik Dokle. *Era e lartësive* [Wind of the highness]. Directed by Dhimitër Orgocka (Stage director). Premiered in Korçë in the theater season 1974-1975. (Qendro 2010: 113).

Gjith' natën dhe këndo

All night sing.

I would like to discuss this case in terms of strategies of self-presentation and representation.²¹ With the background of an experienced singer, Spanja Pipa articulated a given behavior in her self-presentation within the frame of an artistic representation. Her performance maintains the qualities of an art experience. It represents a “new” reality that supposedly did not exist in real life but that was brought into existence from it. The guitar, her playing, and singing instead of being gazed are again indicative of her intention to actively *take part* in the song event and invert the roles. My point is that what she conceived as “inappropriate” or “not good” because based on the reality and society’s norms or mentalities was made possible in her acting experience. Although it was not “reality” it was still an experience that evoked it.

It is not the case here to pose whether this choice was a self-conscious act or not. In my opinion this case gains significance when one considers the way in which the “dynamic nature of individuals”²² enters in interaction with their surroundings. Her act can be interpreted knowing the context of song-making that she is evoking. The case indicates as well a form of challenging her working status. She operated in a supervised environment, in which the agencies of single artists were limited. In this case she is present in the role construction. Lastly, time distance seems to have attributed to the event a special remembering value. If the photograph has been the element that induced talking with her about the case, her insistence of singing this song in the album we scheduled²³ encouraged me to discuss it here.

Spanja Pipa was a popular singer-actress with the capacities of an entertainer. What made the case particular was her disposition to preserve this status beyond the stage. The entertainer figure just like singing went beyond the stage conventionality. Once I broadened the information on her through con-

21. Turino 2008: 101-108

22. Turino 2008: 95

23. The team had a few hesitations but she insisted in including two pieces. *Këndo kitar' me mua* (*Sing guitar with me*) was one of them.

versations with colleagues, family and friends, I realized that this comic character was a meaningful part in her “real” life, behaviors, speech and gesture language. Spanja Pipa had a companionship circle consistent primarily of theater and music colleagues. She maintained the friendship even after her retirement. Gatherings with them seem to have represented a ‘stage’ for her performances. Her friends described her as a person that continued to take the parts of an entertainer in the gatherings organized among each other. Moments from these events are taken in photographs thus confirming their comments. The events represented in my opinion a special setting for her, where she continuously could revive her artistic performances. Although she tended to specify that it was singing that she yearned the most, this symbiosis remains in my opinion pivotal in her artistic performance disposition.

In the case of music she seems however more propelled in exploring certain expressive resources for her own artistic ends.²⁴ Combining effectively her perceptual experience as performer and listener she became an active protagonist of the repertoire. Asked about what she used and liked to listen to, she commented mainly on Albanian music. She distinguished two Albanian popular singers more in particular: Anita Take and Pavlina Nikaj.²⁵ Then she mentioned listening to Greek Radio channels, liked Italian and Greek popular artists. Yet, she described these listening experiences as occasional due to her busy work and of the “embargo”, in listening to foreign stuff.

On the meanwhile she seems a very active listener of the urban repertoire. As Steven Feld points out,

[e]ach listening is not just the juxtaposition of a musical object and a listener. It is the juxtaposition of a dialectical object and a consumer. By dialectical object I mean that one cannot engage a sound object or event without recognition of a simultaneous musical and extramusical reality. The experience is mental and material, code and message, individual and social, formal and ex-

24. Berger 2004: 43-88. In this essay, Harris Berger (2004: 43-88) invites to consider the perceptive dimension of a singer not only in terms of a performer, but also in the role of a listener, which is the perspective I am following here.

25. Pavlina Nikaj (1931-2011) and Anita Take (b. 1934) were singers in Tirana *Estrada Revue*. They counted many performances in Radio Tirana in the 1950s and 1960s. I believe that they were referential to many local singers of that generation.

pressive. In short, any musical object embodies and provokes interpretive tensions. One cannot encounter the object without making associations.²⁶

Spanja Pipa was primarily a listener and consequently a performer of the urban song. Her 'active' engagement with song practice - the partaking - was foregrounded on communication acts. Communication "is neither the idea nor the action but the process of intersection where objects and events are rendered as meaningful or not through the work of social actors."²⁷ The fact that I worked so closely with one of these social actors displayed permitted me to get closer to the interactive dimension of this song practice and its "social effect"²⁸.

The recording project

I heard the voice of Spanja Pipa for the first time in cassettes of the programme *Serenata Korçare*. The "view" I had from this artist up to my dissertation research project was pretty condensed. As previously mentioned I would grant to these recordings the primary motivation for a separate research on her. Spanja Pipa challenges the manhood agencies in the urban repertoire and does that as a representative artist of the city's musical life. In this way, she acquires a specific status within the repertoire. At the same time, she and the *Estrada* revue musicians challenge the conception of serenading as the exclusive experience in the city's song widening the agencies within the song making.

The program *Serenata Korçare* brought her again in the attention of Korça's audiences. Yet she did not undertake any "commercial career" afterwards. After the radio programme Spanja Pipa found herself being recorded or asked from many singers to show them pieces she knew. She recounted that they came with a recorder. "I sung to them the pieces; what could I do, the pieces were not mine." In the inchoate situation of the post-communist period, the

26. Feld 1984b: 6-7

27. Ibid. 2

28. Sugarman 1997. On this see also Part Five.

latter were “free” for use and no author had to be paid. Some of the songs have been recorded and mastered as studio products. They have been manipulated by electronic technology and appear very distanced from the way she conceived and performed them. On her private initiative she recorded a number of songs assisted by a friend musician that accompanied her on a synthesizer. These pieces have been burned in a number of CDs.

The idea to undertake a focalized recording session dedicated to her emerged at the beginning of 2011. Again, the recordings played a role in turning the attention to her. A few months before, in October 2010 together with Nicola Scaldaferrì and in collaboration with Josif Minga, we recorded Spanja Pipa and other musicians in Korçë.²⁹ On that occasion, she performed a few songs accompanied with lauto (llautë) and accordion. This was the first stimulus for undertaking a project that would serve on the one hand as a sound documentation of this event, and on the other as a way to present this music to non-Korçarë and non-Albanian audiences. For personal reasons concerning health issues of the singer³⁰, the project had to be postponed for re-emerging again in the end of 2012. The preparative process of selection of materials and arrangement has been completed with the recording session. It took place from 29th of January to the 4th of February 2013. While I am writing these lines, we are in the stage of mixing and editing.

The recording took place when I considered done the largest part of my work with her. The events that brought its completion displayed in a very condensed format my whole experience of nearly two years of research on her. Therefore I considered the event as a sort of conclusive moment, in which what I have been working on has been channeled towards a final “close-up shot”.

It should be pointed out that this project posed from the beginning other working parameters regarding what I considered to be a fieldwork experience with Spanja Pipa. One difference pertained to the persons involved. It was not

29. We stayed in Korçë from 8th to 11th October 2010.

30. She had an accident and had a recovery time of nearly 14 months.

going to be the work between Spanja Pipa and me; but a shared collaboration of a group of musicians, each with its own role and contribution.³¹ In reviewing the whole experience up to that moment, I realized that the research revolved around ‘traditional’ methods. Work on this project challenged this format and encouraged to look at it by a different perspective. As Nicola Scaldaferrri has pointed out, this meant

[g]oing beyond traditional viewpoints of fieldwork research and molding a situation that bordered the documentation dimension with the artistic type of narrative, but opting a connection in the outcomes from each approach.³²

It re-shaped my interpretive approach in the research, while putting on the foreground Turino’s four distinct fields of music making (participatory and presentational; and on the recording level: high fidelity music and studio art).

Trespassing the boundaries of fieldworking notes

Making an album with recordings centered on Spanja Pipa linked the “high fidelity” field, as “dicent representation of live-performance”³³ with an ethnographic field recording. In the way this live-event was conceived the high fidelity and ethnographic field entered in a sort of collision. Although the setting responded to a domestic place and to the seemingly non-conventionalized performance, its organization retained the representation qualities of a music event. The latter was preceded by a preparation process of selecting the pieces, music arrangements and rehearsing. This process brought to the final stage fourteen pieces. The most part were materials Spanja Pipa sang very often as part of her repertoire. Among the selective criteria however

31. I want to express my sincere gratitude to the persons that made this work come together. Nicola Scaldaferrri and Josif Minga that co-assisted the project. The singer Koço Lalazi, the musicians Tomorr Selimi and Agron Murati. Special thanks go to Lorenzo Pisanello that is still working on the editing process, and finally to the protagonist that inspired all this, Spanja Pipa. Selection of the pieces for the album has been done by Mikaela Minga, Josif Minga and Spanja Pipa. The arrangements are by Josif Minga. The recordings by Nicola Scaldaferrri.

32. “[...] di un superamento di una visione tradizionale della ricerca sul campo, e la creazione di una situazione al confine tra dimensione documentaria e narrazione di tipo artistico, cercando nel contempo di mettere in relazione i risultati dei due approcci.” Scaldaferrri, Feld 2012: 19.

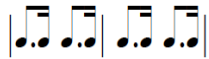
33. Turino 2008: 67, 68

we opted to choose songs that could be representative, putting together idiosyncratic styles. The rhythmic patterns were a relevant selective parameter and included the habanera, the waltz as more cosmopolitan and regional dance based models such as the *aksak*. The other parameter was the accompanying ensemble. It consisted of plucked instruments: guitar, mandolin, and laouto, and the accordion. Presence of the latter has been explicitly requested from Spanja Pipa.

The musicians involved had as a professional background an experience of more than thirty years. Their experience was fundamental in shaping a music texture that was in line with popular urban repertoires of the Mediterranean especially with Fado, Italian *Canzonetta*, the Bal-Musette style, and Greek popular music. The instrumental sound in accompanying these pieces produced a stimulating point for discussion on how local professional musicians may articulate specific musical idioms in a way that sometimes can alter the physiognomy of the latter.

The case of tango-song and the configuration of habanera rhythm were smoothed in the accompaniment and the slower beat. More representative in delineating this aspect has been the case of *hasapiko* dance rhythm, which is distinguished for the demarcated binary beat, the bouzouki metallic timbre - usually playing the melody line and a typical ascending sequential cadence in closing the phrases. The *hasapiko* version in the pieces we recorded loses the demarcated and clear-cut partition. In the song *Më zu malli për të t'parë* (*Longing to see you*)³⁴ the instrumental introduction plays an ascending motive, which is common in the cadence configuration of *hasapiko* dance. In this case the motive is not so demarcated and is played faster. The laouto and mandolin have a greater role in evidencing the distinction: the laouto in the role of the bass line plays an arpeggio with this rhythmic configuration:

34. Spanja Pipa. *Më zu malli për të t'parë*. Arranged by Josif Minga. Recorded by Nicola Scaldaferrì. Korçë, 31 January 2013.



This renders the difference from the simple beat of *hasapiko* that goes like:



When the singer starts, the accentuated traits are smoothed further for giving priority to the vocal line.

Spanja Pipa performed either as soloist or in bi-part performances. We tried to preserve this element. The second vocalist was a male voice, Koço Lalazi.³⁵ The two of them came together and sang on some occasions during my fieldwork. Listening to the recordings I had made with Josif Minga, he suggested that the combination had “consistency, congruence, and a good texture”³⁶ so it would be appropriate to work with him. Spanja Pipa voice ranged the middle register of a female singer. At the moment of recording this voice appeared quasi-raucous and contained in the vocal emission. Koço Lalazi responded to her by using the medium higher registers of a tenor posture.

The discussion on voice and recording process needs a digressive clarification at this point for what concerns matters of sound manipulation and reproduction. We were working on a “mediated sound”³⁷ and this process is still proceeding with the editing and mixing. The latter has an equal creative part in the project while qualifying the case on a different field of discussion that I am not touching here. My approach on the recording performance applies to the momentum. It is in concomitance with the previous experience I had with Spanja Pipa. I analyzed the event from the standpoint of a listener/observant who assisted a presentational performance that was being recorded. Three aspects I would like to highlight at this point.

35. For Koço Lalazi see also the Glossary.

36. Josif Minga. Personal conversation. January 2013.

37. Katz 2004: 2

The first regards the bi-part songs and role of participatory behavior in the way that musicians acted. I noticed during rehearsing time that members of the group positioned themselves always in the same form. The rehearsing for the recording took place in the same domestic space where we did the recording. They placed themselves around the table, inspiring the idea of a cycle that could provide a closed eye contact. Spanja Pipa described this as the “working desk”, preceding a theater or show staging. I would suggest that this posture evoked a congregative and shared posture. At the moment of recording, they formed a half circle to leave space to the technical devices, and microphones. The technical means turned to be problematic especially for the singers because hindered the communicative traits they were used to. More than once they dispensed with them and turned towards participatory models. (Figure 35, Figure 36)

The second observation goes to this communicative traits and the implication of voice and body, of oral techniques of intonation, and emotive gestural behaviors in the course of performance. Spanja Pipa commented frequently on her singing experience. She pointed out the importance of singing “with feeling”. The recording gave me the opportunity to explore how her verbal comments emerged in the course of performance.

Spanja Pipa had a very “clean” verbal enunciation, which rendered the lyrics very comprehensive. During our talks, she kept telling me that words in the songs were extremely important and those that sung the pieces changing them – referring to the recent commercial recordings - were “traitors of song’s sensibility and meaning”. Words dictated for her the way the singer should perform it: if there was a narrative told, it needed a paced articulation; if there was something that had to be emphasized, it had to be done so that the meaning could be rendered. I found pertinent this comment in her performance of the song *Sikur të deshte zemra jote* (*If your heart yearned for*), a stanza-ballad. She performed the piece much slower than an earlier version we had listened to.³⁸

38. Ornela Prifti, Koço Gliozheni. “Sikur të deshte zemra jote.” *Serenata Korçare-Programme*, Episode 4, Song no. 2 in broadcast order, Korçë, 1993). Spanja Pipa was very critic about the performance in a fast beat of this song.

She turned towards a quasi *parlato* manner that rendered a very overt articulation. Listening to this recording, I noticed that she gave a particular accent to the words in bold.

Sikur të deshte zemra jote,	If your heart yearned for
Të marrë vesh këtë dashuri	Learning about this love
Do të dëshmonin këto lote	This tears would tell
Që derdhen kaq me dhembshuri	Shed with so much fondness

Që atë ditë që un të pashë ,	Since the day I saw you
Që të pashë sy ndër sy	That I saw you in the eyes
Ndjeva një mall , m'u hap një plagë	I suffer and yearn
Rri dhe mendoj vetëm për ty	I think only for you

The body behavior took a very active part. It was not easy for her to stay still in front of the microphone, especially in the case of bi-part songs. She continuously turned towards Koço Lalazi in the moments he interfered. Even when we explicitly recommended her to try to be more still in front of the microphone, she reacted to the imposed self-control and instinctively opted to some sort of communication through a gestural form, such as taking his hand, or moving the body in a way that implied his direction.

Lastly, the recording evidenced also the role of her emotional moods in the “rhythms” of performance. This recording represented a ‘special event’ in her life. Age, her previous health issues and the long absence from a presentational performance had to be considered as well. Hence the ability to acclimatize one self with the group and with the working rhythms imposed has been reflected in her performances. It is interesting to evidence here some subtler nuances from one song to another that regarded her self-control in combing the abilities of a stage singer with more inspirational and personal postures. In some cases the lack of this self-control “delayed” the recording and in others rendered her performance very fluent. The most problematic pieces turned out to be those that she had explicitly selected: *Këndo kitar' me mua* (*Sing guitar with me*) and *Sofati*. Both pieces have a similar structure, with a first part sang almost a *piacere*, followed by a refrain that catches up a slow dance rhythm.

Due to her emotional mood, they were the ones with the largest number of takes because she could not go through the end of the song.

By way of conclusion I would say that this final stage of work with Spanja Pipa confirmed to me once more that each time she performs a song she does not operate on a mechanical procedure of retrieval or recovery; hers is a representational revival and a re-experiencing of the pieces embedded in a powerful emotional sphere.



Figure 29. Spanja Pipa before a revue show, 1966.



Figure 30. Touring in a village with the revue, 1964.



Figure 31. Singing a parody, ca. 1972



Figure 32. From the revue show *Dy here mat*. 1964



Figure 33. From the drama *Era e lartësive*. 1972.



Figure 34. With Abaz Hajro during a performance, ca. 1967.



Figure 35. During the rehearsing for the album. 15 January 2013.



Figure 36. During the recording session, 30 January 2013

Mikaela Minga

The Emotional Discourse and Song Making

Chapter 12

The Secret Life of Korça's Love Song

Preliminary

The practice of *Këngë Korçare* revolves around individuals that sang to and for each other (*për njëri-tjetrin*). The *self*-dimension: *për vete* (for me) entwined with the shared one: singing to someone, and singing *për veten tonë* (for ourselves).¹ Such attributes laid the ground for a socially meaningful activity for either the performers or the participants. This necessitated a type of approach that could provide a comprehensive understanding of how this process took place, how people participated in it, and how their participation invented, validated, circulated, and accumulated musical meanings.² The potentiality of this situated activity was, I suggest, the interactive dimension. The communication perspective that I have already approached in the previous chapter can serve for expanding the analysis further.

Steven Feld conceives 'communication' as a term that evokes, alongside process and activity, meaning and interpretation.

Communication is not the 'thing' or 'entity' from which people 'take' meanings; rather, social engagement in the process, through interpretation of sym-

1. See Chapter Eleven, *Spanja Pipa: A Case-Study*, p. 183.

2. I am paraphrasing Feld 1984b: 1.

bolic forms, makes it possible to imagine ongoing meaningful activity as subjectively experienced by social actors. In other words, we cannot speak of meaning without speaking of interpretation (whether public or conscious). By communication then, I mean a socially interactive and intersubjective process of reality construction through message production and interpretation.³

The close collaboration with Spanja Pipa helped me test in more subtle forms where this socially interactive and intersubjective process engaged its forces. The reasons for that concerned the particular position she had in my research as a stage artist and as a woman. On the other hand, the events in which she was the protagonist and in which we focused on represented a period of change and contradictions. While the society's intellectual generation in particular moved towards more liberal expressions in an ongoing process that had started in the 1930s, things were becoming gradually, and then forcibly, restricted by the Cultural Revolution. This made Spanja Pipa a reference in the construction of these narratives while rendering more explicit the emotional discourse in *Këngë Korçare*.

Lila Abu-Lughod and Catherine Lutz note that emotions came to be constituted in their current form as "physiological forces, located within individuals, that bolster [their] sense of uniqueness and [...] provide access to some kind of inner truth about the self."⁴ Yet, their strategy in studying this domain is routed in the fact that emotion is a "sociocultural construct"⁵.

On the other hand

[t]he focus on discourse allows not only for insight into how emotion, like the discourse in which it participates, is informed by cultural themes and values, but also how it serves as an operator in a contentious field of social activity, how it affects a social field, and how it can serve as an idiom of communicating, not even necessarily about feelings, but about such diverse matters as social conflict, gender roles, or the nature of the ideal or deviant person.⁶

The commitment to analyzing carefully these specific social situations reveals that the emotional discourse is embodied in the act of singing and tran-

3. Feld 1984b: 2

4. Abu-Lughod, Lutz 1990: 6

5. Abu-Lughod, Lutz 1990: 7

6. Abu-Lughod, Lutz 1990: 11

spires as the “texted vocal music”⁷. At the same time it is placed in an ongoing meaningful activity that is subjectively experienced by social actors. I would attribute a significant part in approaching this interpretive frame firstly to love songs.

Historicizing the love-song

The majority of songs in the repertoire are songs about love. The verbal context plays its part as an expressive vehicle for texting love. It would be appropriate to begin by commenting on these lyrics:

Sa bukur rronim-ë,	Living was great
Kur ishim bashkë	When we were together
Dashurinë e kishim-ë	Our love was
Të ëmbël shumë	So very sweet
Zili na kishin-ë	The others were
E gjithë bota,	So jealous
Kur na shikonin-ë	When they saw
Bashkë të dy	Us together
Të du, Të du, të dua ,	I love, I love, I love you
Gjer në buz’ të varrit-ë	Till I die
Edhe të vdekur, edhe të vdekur	And dead,
Unë s’të le ⁸	I’ll never leave you

They were published in 1909.⁹ The ascendancy of European literary Romanticism can be traced in the sentimental subject, melancholia, and sadness. The authors were literary figures and activists of *Rilindja Kombëtare* (*National*

7. Feld, Fox 1994: 30

8. Lira group. *Sa bukur rronimë*. Music attributed to Spiridon Ilo; Lyrics by Spiridon Ilo. Recorded in Radio Tiranë, ca. 1956.

9. Sakoli 1909: 48

Rebirth)¹⁰, locally renowned. They wrote or adapted lyrics devoted to homeland nostalgia and patriotic sensibility on the one hand and to romantic and sentimental love subjects on the other.

Eno Koço, considering the role of Romanticism in the written Albanian culture points out that

[t]he love songs did not derive directly from sociological and historical contexts; that is they did not project the political situation as did the historic and patriotic songs, but they became the center around which the urban singers and composer-arrangers orbited. They also became part of the cultural life and the focus of nationalistic feeling, ironically by allowing the people to “forget” the political situation in the pleasure of listening to the urban song.¹¹

Following the perspective of an embodied experience, I would slightly alter his opinion. Both love songs and patriotic songs were, I suggest, meaningful socially and historically. I would ground this assumption in the public dimension molded by *parè* or *mbledhkë* singing¹² and in the use that the social actors made of it, as “a type of *framed* activity”¹³ for communicating emotional needs.

The symbolic value of love songs seems concomitant with marriage practices (a quasi-sacred institution in society) and the idea that love could establish the unity in marriage between man and woman. This opposed to economic stipulation (dowry), arranged marriages, and the role of family consents in combining the mate pair. Persuasive to it become as well class issues, interreligious, and inter-ethnic based relationships. These lyrics display one of these issues:

Një dit' shkova nga sahati, pashë një vajzë që shkonte
[Once I passed by the clock tower, saw a girl passing by]
Dhe ajo sytë nga mua kurrë nuk i largonte
[And she did not stop looking at me]

10. See Chapter One.

11. Koço 2004: 40

12. See Chapter Three.

13. Turino 2008: 17. His Italics.

Pas ishareteve që pashë dhe një letër seç ja dhashë
[Once I saw she cared, I gave her a letter]
Brenda seç i kisha shkruar, dashuri për t'u martuar
[Inside I had written 'I want to marry you]

Dhe përgjigjen seç e mora, e kish shkrojtur vetë dora
[And the answer when I got, written with her own hand]
Kur e hapa dhe lexova, dhe nga gazi fluturova
[Opening and reading it made me more than happy]

Jam një djalë kristianë, e lash' besën në një anë,
[I am a Christian boy, leave my religion aside]
Po dhe ti moj Qerime, mbaje besën që më ke
[And you Qerime, keep your faith on your part]¹⁴

The songs therefore had a fundamental social life giving voice to love emotions and informing on the social situation.

Love and marriage

Pertinent in the love song repertoire is the “play of commonplaces”¹⁵. They have a male authorship and a female poetry object. The lyrics communicate very frequently a hackneyed sentimentality.

Vajzë pse rri e helmuar	Girl, why are you sad
Je ligur, je tretur	You seem pale, depressed
Vajza ime, shpresa ime,	My girl, my hope
Ç'maraz të ka mbetur	What is there your concern

[...]

Ky marazi yt ç'më hëngri	Your disquiet is my distress
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14. Pandi Tabaku (b. 1945). *Një dit' shkova nga sahati*. Recorded by Mikaela Minga. Korçë, 13 August 2012.

15. Peraino 2011: 15

Rrush i bardhë i pjekur	White mature grape
Vajza ime, dil nga vëndi	Girl, appear to me
Nga vëndi që del argjëndi	From your silver place
Nga vëndi që del argjëndi	From that place
Argjendi i kulluar	Where lucent silver comes
Vajza ime shpresa ime,	My girl, my hope
Ç'mbetëm pa martuar ¹⁶	So sad we could not marry

Conventional scenarios of flirting 'rituals' or courtship behavior have two main protagonists: the self (the "I") and the other ("she"):

Desha të t'fjalos për dashurinë time
[I wanted to talk with you, about my love]
Po kur këtë nuk e di
[When, I don't know]
Po nëse zemra jote më dëgjon
[But if your heart listens to it]
Ndoshta atë ditë do të t'them
[One day maybe I will say to you]

Do të t'them, se ti më pëlqen,
[That I like you]
Do të t'them, se në puthjen tënde fshihet e ardhmja ime
[That in your kiss, is my future]
Ëndrra ime hyjnore, të cilën ti akoma nuk e njeh.
[My dream divine that you still don't know]¹⁷

Properly speaking however,

[L]ove songs of every epoch, from Middle Ages to the present day, embody this paradox: they often fuse the most personal emotion with the most banal language. But some love songs may stand in relief against a background of formulaic music, clichéd lyrics, conventional scenarios; they may seem more

16. Tole Adham and *Lira* group. *Vajzë pse rri e helmuar*. Recorded in Radio Tirana, ca. 1956.

17. Ligorag Qano and friends. *Desha të t'fjalos*. Music and Lyrics attributed to Ligorag Qano. Recorded in Radio Korçë by Vasil Dishnica ca. 1960.

expressive or subjective than others, presenting not a common language of love but rather a point of view rooted in a specific time, place, psychology, and vocabulary. Furthermore, this subjective voice may be more evident in the musical setting.¹⁸

This self-expression seems multiplied each time a song was performed and is probably a reason why only a distinct number of them were remembered and preserved. What I am suggesting here is the investigation of a complex bond between emotional discourse about love and the “texted vocal music” in evoking a world of meanings structured by ongoing social formations.¹⁹

From research with different generations of singers I came out with the assumption that the element embedding the emotional discourse did not pertain to the marriage unity. Although it was explicitly verbalized in specific tunes, what embedded this emotional discourse was the concealed status of a love relationship and how the latter was “implicated in the play of power and the operation of a historically changing system of social hierarchy.”²⁰ Here I would cite initially the family-system, the marriage institution and the wideness of the practice beyond the Christian community. From the 1960s, in these dynamics entered also state authority with its “healthy” morality against ‘bourgeois’ love ideas and the intimate conceptions of relationships.²¹

The status of discretion, clandestineness, and confidentiality of the relationship envelops the discourse on ‘romantic love’, here understood as the incorporation of an ideal, which combines the pervasive emotional involvement of passionate love, personal attraction and attachment to someone, for achieving the unity between man and woman.²² Romantic love is according to Anthony Giddens, a culturally specific phenomenon with a “specific cluster of beliefs

18. Peraino 2011: 3.

19. Sugarman 1997: 27

20. Abu-Lughod, Lutz 1990: 15

21. Beginning with the mid 1960s, the status of love relationships had to qualify as well to the dynamics of the revolutionary life and the ‘new’ morality. The latter maintained officially a ‘healthy’ attitude on love and intimacy topics. The ‘purist’ morality involved censorship of “dubious” attitudes that were punished or put into forms of re-education. Emblematic can be for example the fact that love or kissing scenes were banned in Albanian film production.

22. Giddens 1992: 37-64

and ideals geared to transcendence.”²³ The love song chases the romantic idea by putting in relation in imaginative ways, a fictional narrative with the world of action.²⁴

Love songs represent also a site for the validation of self-expression and the exploration of individuality. This can be “measured” by their potentiality of being firmly *in place*.²⁵

Shkoj për ditë rrugës sate, Si më parë, Por më par' të kisha ty E sot kam mallë	Each day, I walk by your street Like before But before I had you, Today I have nostalgia ²⁶
Rrinim bashkë mbi sofatin Pranë e pranë Ndizej malli i panginjur Për sevdanë	We stayed together on the stone bench Side by side With the inflamed, voracious desire Of our love
Me mall e sa dëshirë Tej ngrysej në errësirë Më dhe ti puthjen e parë	With yearn and desire Once the night fell down, You kissed me for the first time
Gjithçka është mbushur fletë Sofati rruga e shkretë Teksa fryn era e marrë Ku m'dhe ti puthjen e parë ²⁷	The leaves have fallen Down on the stone, in the street A crazy wind is blowing Where you first kissed me

23. Giddens 1992: 45

24 Ricoeur 1981: 295-296

25. Casey 1996: 13-52

26. Mall means nostalgia, yearn, longing. See for that also Chapter Fourteen.

27. Nusret Frashëri. *Sofati*. Music by Abaz Hajro; Lyrics by Aleko Skali. In *Serenata Korçare-Programme*, Episode 6, Song no. 9 in broadcast order. Radio Korçë, 1993.

Sofati is a slow sentimental ballad of the 1960s. Music is written by Abaz Hajro, lyrics are by Aleko Skali. I quote it here primarily for its ‘iconic’ attributes. The song has only been performed once on-stage for “living” then its latent condition as a “street song”²⁸. It was recorded for the first time by Nusret Frashëri, in 1993 and was one of the pieces that Spanja Pipa insisted on singing for our recording project.²⁹

Cm Fm

G Cm

Fm G Cm

Cm Fm G

Cm

1. 2.

After Spanja Pipa. *Sofati*. Recorded in 2013. Transcribed by Mikaela Minga.

Being *in place* does not only refer to the concrete imagery evoked by *sofati* locale, although it is certainly suggestive. The song embeds the *in place* situation by investing the creative potentialities with a greater sense of freedom and intimacy. From a textual point of view, it can be noted that *love* here converges semantically the meaning of world *sevda* and *dashuri* functioning within the love-passion idea. Beside ‘love’, in this song are introduced a chain of elements that include *mall* (nostalgia, yearning) *dëshirë* (desire) and then the

28. Vaskë Kolaci. Personal Conversation, August 2012.

29. The other piece was *Këndo kitar' me mua* [Sing guitar with me].

street (rruga) and the *night* (nata, errësira). These components delineate a “grammar of nostalgia”³⁰ ingrained in the repertoire of the 1950s and 1960s with much more evidence and force than in the previous periods.

Being so much about love and intimacy has been described to me, as being the reason why songs like *Sofati* did not have a public stage life. A sentimental slow ballad like *Sofati*, the sad mood in telling a story about love, longing, and loss is in contradiction with the pervasive aesthetic of light song production in Albania.³¹ I believe however, that the symbolic and meaningful value of the love songs rests not primarily in their dialectic relation to the Albanian light music situation and the offstage condition. In my opinion, they are integral to the emotional discourse of romantic love relationships and their contended status.

The iconicity of this song is sustained by the *in place* condition because the elements in it revolve around a local universe. They are imbued with significance from the actors that experienced it. The song is related to the particular life-world and also to a specific time, psychology, and vocabulary.

Whose Emotion

During fieldwork I found myself continuously in a sort of contradiction between singing love and talking about love. Serenading was a male courtship behavior accepted from both genders. Yet, this term was not verbally explicit when commenting on these topics. Protagonists were discreet in expressing concrete personal experience with someone but did not show any restraint in commenting on the fact that this act was largely oriented by a physical stimuli – Bourdieu’s “body *hexis*”³² - communicated to someone that responded to attributes such as beautiful, attractive, and ‘modern’ (that is, was ‘welcome’ to these forms of courtship).

30. Elliott 2010: 30.

31. On this topic and the ‘grammars of nostalgia see also Chapter Fourteen.

32. Bourdieu 1977: 82

It can be said that the love song represented a relationship between two partners conceived in the interplay between the 'possible' – what one might be able to do, experience, hope, think, know – and the 'actual' – the acts that made the quotidian experiences.³³ This is rendered in the way that the lyrics explicitly turn towards the need for the spoken word, the speech act.

Vendosa vajzë të të dashuroj	I decided to love you
Të dërgova një letër,	So I sent you a letter
Mos qoft' e thënë ajo që flet	Cursed what I hear from you
Ti dashuron një tjetër	That you love another
Aman, aman, aman,	Please, please, please
seç m'u dogj i shkreti xhan	My soul is burning
Për fjalën tënde zemra	For your word
Moj po më qan ³⁴	My heart is crying

The male in this scenery takes the "role of a romantic"³⁵. This detail prompted me to move beyond the specter of circumscribed 'gendered' emotional coordinates such as *besa* (faith), *krenari* (pride), *nder* (honour) that have represented an important interpretive axis in the studies of gender emotionality and music in Albanian speaking regions.³⁶ This does not detach the discussion from the "gendered culture"³⁷ but opens it towards a different perspective.

The gendered culture displays that the activity remained rooted in the shared male solidarity in singing love songs. The maintenance of this male exclusivity is indicative because it illustrates that

[t]he romantic does not [...] treat women as equals. He is in thrall to a particular woman (or to several women in sequence) and he would build his life

33. Turino 2008: 17

34. Afërdita Zonja. *Vendosa vajzë të të dashuroj*. In *Serenata Korçare-Programme*, Episode 6, Song no. 1 in broadcast order. Radio Korçë, 1993.

35. Giddens 1992: 59

36. Pistrick 2012a; Sugarman 1997.

37. Magrini 2003: 2

around her; but his succumbing is not a gesture of equality. [...] For most men romantic love stands in tension with the imperatives of seduction. [...] Men want status among other men conferred by material rewards and conjoined to rituals of male solidarity.³⁸

The lyrics inform about sceneries in which the girl or the girls are protagonists: the girl at the doorstep (*vajza që rri te porta*); then the one that walks in the boulevard, and the girl that responds in a way or another to the flirting ritual (*bën isharet me supe*). The women's detailed 'presence' in the lyrics - the articulation of concrete actions and descriptions - goes alongside the moment where the latter were becoming more present in public life, working settings and education. According to Giddens these factors represent an evidence of women's attributed potentiality to evoke love, that is, to become an object whose capturing of the heart from the other prompts "creation of a mutual narrative biography."³⁹

The male remained the dominant performers of this song. The photographs I collected (dating from 1955-1989) show that any female appearance is complementary or participatory to the male group, determining the role played by gender in this music making. *Këngë Korçare* were not performed solely by men. Counting the presence of women in the settings of performance this stanza ballad provides an exception to the rule because it was attributed to a female protagonist.

Sikur të dinte zemra jote, Të marrë vesh k'të dashuri	If your heart yearned for Learning about this love
Do të dëshmonin këto lote Që derdhen sysh me dhembshuri	This tears would tell everything Shed with so much fondness
Në e ke zemrën aq të ftohtë, Sa s'ndjen dëshirë as dashuri love	If your heart is so cold That does not have desire and love

38. Giddens 1992: 59-60

39. Giddens 1992: 46

O shpirti yt mos e premtoftë Të dergjet kot ky trupi im	Oh, your heart does not deserve My suffering and distress
Që atë çast kur të kam parë Kur un të pashë ty ndër sy, Ndjeva një mall, m'u hap një plagë Dhe s'ëndërroj vetëm për ty	Since the day I saw you That I saw you in the eyes I suffer and yearn I think only about you
Por ti siç duket s'ke mëshirë Nuk ndjen për mua dashuri Se po të kishe pak mëshirë Nuk do më mbaje kaq mëri	But you don't care You don't love me Because if you needed me You won't be so cold
Le të lotojnë syt' e mia Por si rrëke dhe si përronj Dhe le të bëhen kroj e vija	Let my tears flow Like the torrents and creeks And may they become stream and brooks
Se gjer të vdes un' s'të harroj	Cause till I die, I won't forget you
Në mos u pjekshim lamtumirë, Mos më harro më ki ndërmend Në mos më daç po je i lirë Të bësh ç'të thotë ky qeji tënd ⁴⁰	And if we don't see each other Don't forget, remember me If you don't love me, you are free To do whatever you wish to.

I recorded the piece with the Bimllarë family. The singer is Vasilika Bimbli (b. 1925) to whom I was addressed by a number of elder singers that credited to this woman the authorship of this song. She had continuous memory lapses in talking about it, but was very fluent in singing the stanzas twice: once with her cousin and once with her daughter as secondary voices, in the posture of a bi-part performance. This woman had a family background, which was very close to the *Këngë Koçare* practice. Vasilika Bimbli was married to a member of Bimllarë family while her maiden name was Lalazi.⁴¹ Although one cannot

40. Vasilika Bimbli, Jorgjeta Lalazi. *Sikur të deshte zemra jote*. Recorded by Mikaela Minga. 1 September 2012.

41. I have mentioned these families in Chapter Three.

assert with certainty the authorship to her, the ballads' intimacy suggests a female approach to this "mutual narrative biography", which can be explained by this kin background and also by the sensed spiritual bond that this type of song suggests.

Tullia Magrini, when considering gender and female musical behaviors, suggests looking beyond the male-female level for developing "a vision of the human dimension of musical activity that is increasingly richer and more complex". In this level "each musical practice may be used to represent, convey, and elaborate specific values for the individual genders in particular contexts."⁴² Following this line, the agencies of Spanja Pipa in this repertoire made it clear that the musical world can be a privileged field of expressing and challenging "local models of gender identity."⁴³ Being sustained by her artist status and also by her talent, Spanja Pipa's agencies can be read as a gender challenge, a form of putting into question the conformist beliefs and practices of society and their normative pressures.⁴⁴ Singing love was pursuing a self-expression that she wanted to communicate in her own way, as an individual and as a woman.

Love songs conveyed therefore a specific emotional status. Their performance embedded a "form of social action that created effects in the local reality". And these effects have been "read in a culturally informed way"⁴⁵ from both genders, leading to agencies that forged the strong communication bond between these musical experiences and the social world.

42. Magrini 2003: 2

43. Magrini 2003: 11

44. Paraphrasing Schafer 1994: 1-2

45. Abu-Lughod, Lutz 1990: 12

Chapter 13

A Digression to the Rule: Humoristic Songs and the Ironic Consciousness

In the repertoire of *Këngë Korçare* are a number of pieces labeled as *Këngë Humoristike* (*Humoristic Songs*) for the humorous character of the verses. They are fewer compared to the pieces that have been considered up to this moment. Most of them have been documented as sound recordings, although in a scattered manner.¹

One reason for treating them separately here was that these pieces needed consideration from a historical perspective. They had a specific creative period related to distinct protagonists. For the case, I found pertinent to broaden the 'humoristic' concept and discuss this repertoire as related to forms of critical social commentary. This made me include theoretical works on irony and satire.² I need to clarify however that in discussing this, my aim is not so much the literary comprehension of the verbal texts as the investigation of how song-making has been imbued with these elements.

1. Tefta Tashko Koço and *Lira* group recorded some of them. In *Serenata Korçare-Programme* was recorded a medley of four such pieces. There are also a few commercial studio productions.

2. The bibliographic on satire these subject-matters are vast. For humor, I have relied more notably in: Apte 1985; Carrell 1997a; 1997b. On irony I have referred to the 'classical' studies of Douglas C. Muecke (1969; 1982); See also Colebrook 2004. On satire see the literary-based perspectives in the edited book by Ruben Quintero (2007a). A very stimulating approach is offered in Griffin 1994.

Vasil Ballauri notes that in the earlier *paré* or *mbledhka* practice, telling funny stories was customary and pretty popular. Yet, he did not describe them as a musical experience.³ It can be estimated that the creative period of this repertoire was from the 1930s up to the 1950s. I ground this assumption first on the information that the lyrics provide: the representation of social events, locations, and figures. Secondly, the oral accounts for these songs are rather dispersive. Nevertheless, people tend to distinguish very specifically one protagonist: Petro Dula (1915-1959?) who seems to have played an important part. I will also include the work of Kristaq Cepa (1908-1988), a literary figure of the 1930s who was distinguished for its satirical poetry.

'First Couplet': Kristaq Cepa

Kristaq Cepa became very acclaimed and popular in the 1930s for his satirical poetry. He wrote primarily under pseudonyms: mostly Kapa and in few cases, Miki-Maus. He published in the local printed press and only later were these materials produced in poetry volumes⁴. Kristaq Cepa studied at the French Lyceum and belonged to the 1930s generation of Albanian writers⁵. After completing his studies, he worked as a teacher and then instructor of education. He spent his lifetime in Korçë (d.1988, at the age of eighty) but was active as writer only in the 1930s.

3. Ballauri 2003: 22-23

4. Cepa 1975; Cepa 2000.

5. The 1930s represent "a zenith in Albanian written culture" (Elsie 2005: 161). The most prominent figures spanned various modern literary genres. Their works were disseminated primarily through literary periodicals. These periodicals represented a publishing industry of quality for diffusing information be it political, cultural or literary. This evolved alongside the autocratic regime of Ahmet Zogu (1895-1961) in that period King of the Albanians. Nevertheless, press was less censored, at least compared to the communist regime. Many intellectuals of the thirties, Cepa notwithstanding, came close to leftist political views, approaching socialist ideas and communist thought. This was more a consequence of the social problems, rather than a direct link with the political events to come. (See Elsie 2005: 94-161; more in detail: 159-161).

In Korçë one of the most prominent from these periodicals was *Bota e Re* (Published twice a week from 1936 to 1937) but alongside can be cited also *Flaga* and *Rilindja*. Kristaq Cepa was active in these papers magazines publishing under pseudonym, a common practice for other writers as well: Selim Shpuza (Harbuti), Qemal Stafa (Brutus), Nonda Bulka (Chri-Chri), and Migjeni.

Cepa focused more in particular in political and social satire. He was “fundamentally *engagé*”⁶ in the public function that his work should have. Cepa addressed a range of diverse topic concerning the city’s society and the aspects of social life, among which the musical ones did not make an exception:

Pa gajle, pa halle	
Parësi e vendit, pa gajle, pa halle	High society, no problem, no concern
Në sallën luksoze venë lozin valle,	In the luxury hall, go and dance
Venë lozin valle, zbaviten dëfrejnë	Dance, entertain, and have fun
Pa dhe botës tjetër vetë i rrëfejnë	And to other people ⁷ show at the same time
Si lohet tangoja, si lohet fokstroti,	How one tango and foxtrot can dance
Jo më devolliçe, jo valle qëmoti,	And no more <i>devolliçe</i> ⁸ , or old round dance
Si e mbërthen djali, të bijën e botës	How the boy closely holds the unknown girl
Të ngrihen përpyetë dhe qimet e kokës. ⁹	In a chilling posture that makes you feel mad.

He mapped the city’s life in what can be described as a “light social satire”¹⁰ encompassing events, manners, fashion, and behaviors. In narrating the changes in taste and manners Kristaq Cepa tried, I suggest, to make some sort of evaluation [from a leftist point of view] on what mattered and what counted in the contemporary society:

Moda Paralele [Parallel fashion]	
Bulevard’i Korçës trotuar me plloça	Korça’s boulevard, cobbled pathway
Aty dalin djemtë, aty del gjithë Korça	Boys promenade, Korça prome

6. Quintero 2007b: 2

7. Meaning the lower classes.

8. Devolliçe (also known as *Gorarçe*) is the name of a round male dance very known in Korça’s region.

9. Cepa 2000: 78-79. (The poem was first published in 1936).

10. Jones 2007: 341

	nades
Aty venë e vinë, djem e vajza bashkë	There passing by, boy and girl together
Porsi ditë bajrami si një ditë pashke.	Like a Bajram day, like an Easter day
Ja fustani i çupës, shih kostum i djalit	See the girls' dress, see the boy's suit
Prerë sipas modes, pas stinës beharit	All in fashion and in season
Stofat e Evropës, këpucë Greqie	Clothes from Europe, shoes from Greece
Jo industry vendi por veç mall Anglie	Nothing made here, all made outside
[...] [...]	
Po studentët tanë, kjo ajk e rinisë	Our young students, our youth elite
Nuk pëlqejnë vendin, as zakon e shpi'së	Do not like this place, neither its manners
Duan të ketë ballo, të jepen baleta	They want <i>Ballo</i> , they want ballets
Se kështu ka dhe jashtë,	Like the life abroad,
kështu kalohet jeta	this is how it should be spent
[...] [...]	
Bulevard'i Korçës, bulevard' i parë	Korça's boulevard, first among the others
Thua është Parisi moda s'ka të sharë ¹¹	You say is like Paris, fashion no comments

Kristaq Cepa's relation to the urban repertoire was in line with this *engagé* role. He is the lyricist of the song *S'kam ç'e dua pasurinë* [I do not need wealth], a sort of lampoon for the dowry economic stipulation, at that time in a focus of criticism.¹² The music of this piece - a bi-part song, in a ternary waltz rhythm - is by the Western-highly trained musician Kristo Kono.¹³

11. Cepa 2000: 23-25. (This poem was first published in 1934.)

12. The dowry problem has been brought into focus by an acculturated stratum. The topic emerged as a criticism through press in the 1920-1930s. See Loni Kristo, "Martesë pa prikë, e rrallë dh'e jashtëzakonshme për në

Shumica kur dinë se kan' shumë prikë	When they learn the girl has the dowry
E marrin vajzën të jetë dhe shtrigë	Be she a witch, be she with mustache
Të ketë dhe mjekër, mustaqet një pash, Se syri iu erret iu bëhet kobash	As blind as a bat They marry her
Harrojnë se parja harxhohet fët, fët, Dhe zonjën e tyre e marrin për zët	Forget that money with easiness can be spent And their lady so quick can they hate
Po ajo mbetet malli nuk bëhet hallall Se lahen mëkatet që kur jemi gjall'	But she is the real thing, nothing else matters For paying the sins before one dies
S'kam ç'e dua pasurinë, po s'ma deshi zemra sot Nuk e ble dot dashurinë me të holla është e kot'	I do not need wealth If my heart does not want it I do not buy love with cash, no way
Shumica kur dine kan' metelik Binara të sajat, pa ka dhe çiflik Kërkojnë të bëhen dhëndurrë me zor Aty ku s'i qasin aspak në oborr	When they learn she has <i>metelik</i> ¹⁴ Households and plantation They plea for the bridegroom where even on the doorstep are not allowed to stand
Pranojnë të gjorët të bëhen therror	They sacrifice with ease

Korçë" [Marriage without dowry. Rare and extraordinary in Korçë], *Shqiptari i Amerikës*, 1 shtator 1923, p. 7; No author, "Martesë në mënyrë përparimtare", [Progressive marriage], *Zëri i Korçës*, 19 November 1929, p. 2; S.T, "Mbi martesën pa prikë të vajzave", [On the marriage without dowry], *Zëri i Korçës* 9 December 1930, p. 2; W. "Tregu i të rinjve. Prika, ideali i korçarëve" [Youth market. Dowry: Korçarë aim], *Gazeta e Korçës*, 6 February 1932, p. 1, 4.

13. The lyrics were written in 1935 (Cepa 2000:120). According to the editor's note in the lyrics the piece has been "put into music" by Kristo Kono. There is no published version of this music. Kristo Kono in an article (1976: 107-110) speaking about this period brings also the music notation of the piece affirming his authorship.

14. *Metelik* is the name of an old Ottoman coin. Here presumes wealth.

Kur dijnë se paja u vjen me vapor
Po shpirti s'kënaqet dhe zemra nuk do
Verdhushkat i shtyjnë, thon' u marto!¹⁵

When the dowry comes by sea
Although the heart is not happy
at all
The coins say anyway the last
word

The satirical conception of the verses highlights the sense of moral vocation and social intent that generally distinguished Ceba's literary production. The song lambasts this phenomenon. It was performed for the first time in a comic tableau entitled *Gruaja me mjekër* (Bride with beard).¹⁶ Yet, it survived and has been popularized as an autonomous piece. The first and best known recorded versions is the one of Tole Adham and *Lira* group.

Shu - mi - ca kur di - në se ka shu - më pri - kë, e
ma - rri - në vaj - zën të je - të dhe shtri - gë, të ke - të dhe mje - kër mus -
ta - qe një pash, se sy - ri u err - et u bë - het ko - bash, ha -
rroj - në se par - ja har - xho - het fët fët dhe zo - njën e ty - re e

15. Tole Adham and *Lira* group. *S'kam ç'e dua pasurinë*. Music by Kristo Kono; Lyrics by Kristaq Ceba. Recorded in Radio Tirana, ca. 1956

16. Ceba 2000: 120. Kono 1976: 107-110

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24
ma - rrin për zët. Po ajo mbe - tet ma - lli nuk bë - het ha - llall, se

30
la - hen më - ka - tet që - kur je - mi gjall. S'kam ç'e du - a

37
pa - su - ri - në, po s'ma de - shi ze - mra sot, nuk e

44
blej dot da - shu - ri - në me të ho - lla ë - ëshit' e kot'.

After Tole Adham and *Lira Group*. *S'kam ç'e dua pasurinë*. Recorded in Radio Tirana, ca. 1956. Transcribed by Mikaela Minga

“Second couplet”: Singing jokes

The most part of the humoristic songs display the tendency to poke fun in representing social manners. The lyrics below pick up again the marriage problem with slightly ironic notes:

Në dyqan të Tasit-ë, karshi Mitropolisë
[In Tasi's shop, in front of Mitropolia]
Mblidhen djemkat e skolisë, nga sevda e bukurisë
[School boys gather, for beauties and love]

Bëmë moj zonjë dhëndërrë, se jam një djal' i ëmbëlë
[I wanna be your bridegroom; I am a sweet boy]
Se s'pi verën as rakinë, po jam një djalë për shtëpinë
[Don't drink *raki*, but I am a family guy]
Se s'pi verën as duhanë, po jam një djalë për dyqanë

[Don't smoke, don't drink wine; I am a boy for your shop]¹⁷

Më bën zemra tikitikitak, s'di se ç'xhuvap të të jap¹⁸

[My heart is ticking, don't know what other can I say to you]

For the most part, these songs are stanza-based. The focus is primarily on the story told. The narratives border 'real' events to their imagining as real. Customarily they take as a point of departure 'nodes' and 'paths'¹⁹ with a larger concentration of people in the city's social life. Korça's boulevard and its promenade appears frequently in these songs.

Në dy - qan të Ta - si - të kar - shi Mi - tro - po - li - së. Mbli-dhen

6 djem-të e sko - li së nga sev - da e bu - ku ri - së. Bë - më - moj zo - një

12 dhën - dë - rë, se jam një djal' i em - bë - lë.

18 Më bën zem-ra tik tik tak s'di seç xhu-vap të të jap, Më bën

17. Shop means able to manage the commercial activity, which presumes that the piece was a tribute to a girl coming from a merchant family.

18. Lira group. *Bëmë zonjë dhëndër*. Recorded in Radio Tirana, ca. 1956.

19. Lynch 1990[1960]: 46-73. See Chapter Three, pp. 50-51.

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24 1.
jap. O moj ti që rri ne por - ta. Mos dë -

30
gjo seç tho - në bo - ta. Se bo - ta na kan ha - set plaç moj

36 1. 2.
go - jë që s'më flet. flet. Më bën zem - ra tik tik

42 1. 1.
tak s'di seç xhu - vap të të jap, Më bën jap.

The melody line after Osmalli 1958: 26-28

Bulevard'i Korçës, ka vajza pa masë
[Korça's boulevard has many girls]
Dalin e shëtisin, pa lejën e mamasë
[Promenading there, without permission]

Veshin pandallona, hip në biçikleta
[Wearing trousers, riding bicycles]
Dhe kur gjejnë djemtë iu thonë tungjatjeta
[And saying hello to guys]

Njërën pe këtyre seç e pashë vetë
[I saw one of them]
Vinte që nga Mborja, në një tatëpjetë
[Coming from Mborja, riding down]

Një fëmi e vogël, na i del përpara
[A small child, got in her way]
Që të mos e shtypë, zë frenot e para
[So as not to hurt him, she stops immediately]

Zë frenot e para, dhe na u rrëzua
[She felt down and tore her dress]
Seç iu gris fustani dhe u turpërua
[And became ashamed]²⁰

These songs are grounded on a sense of joking. They “tell” a joke that is malicious in character and masculine-based. Mahadev Apte has dedicated a comprehensive discussion to the topic of “joking relationships” and how they “manifest a consciousness of group identity or solidarity.”²¹ Apte’s observation about the common background of joke teller and its audience can be applied to this case as well. These pieces highlight the same gender-based bonds of the male performers, while revolving on male-female socializing ideas. Following Apte’s line, it can be suggested that many of these pieces have been articulated as ‘singable jokes’ shaping in this way a playful musical behavior within the male group.

‘Third Couplet’: Petro Dula

Ligor Papakristo, alias Petro Dula (1915-1959?) was a self-taught musician but very popular in the 1930s-1950s. The primary sources on this artist are very scant and this brief description is the result of primarily oral accounts and few writings on him.²² Petro Dula came from a lower middle class background. He did humble jobs: was a cook, but worked also as decorator, and baker. He is usually described as a nomadic wanderer (bohem), a street artist whose performances took place outside and attracted people passing by, and also other performers that liked his pieces and learned them by heart. Paraphrasing one of my interviewees, Petro Dula was known for making verses, singing in the streets, and serenading. He was also known for drinking *raki*,

20. Thanas Kondili, Kiço Sholla, Gjergji Peleshi, Ilkë Peleshi, Ilir Dishnica, Kiço Dishnica. Genci Kadilli. *Këngë humoristike*. [Songs Collection from Serenata Korçare-Programme. Tape 4]. Audiocassete. Side B - Selection 7.

21. Apte 1985: 66

22. See Ziko 2012: 197-200; Fundo 2009: 57-61. I am thankful also to Vasil Dishnica, Gjergji Peleshi, Vaskë Kolaci.

and making fun in songs of all those around him, including himself. The *Themistokli Gërmenji* park had been retained as one of his most favored places. For a period of time, he had been part of the 'Artistic Army Group (Grupi Artistik i Ushtrisë), formed in 1944.²³ The radio technician Vasil Dishnica asserts also that Dula did few live radio performances in the 1940s.²⁴ It is recounted that he left Korçë in the late 1950s and moved to Tiranë where he died very shortly afterwards.²⁵

Considering the simultaneity with other humoristic songs, the writer Klito Fundo and the musician Vaskë Kolaci maintain that he had been the main performer and producer of these songs.²⁶ It is an estimation that cannot be fully asserted, although this creativity actually seemed to "cease" at the time when Petro Dula left for Tiranë. Among the songs attributed to him, I would distinguish the ones below, based on opinions of the musicians of his age that used to know and recalled singing with him. These were recorded for the first time in 1993, during the *Serenata Korçare* programme:

23. Avrazi 2013: 35

24. Vasil Dishnica. Personal Conversation. August 2012

25. Gjergji Peleshi. Personal Conversation. January 2013. See also Ziko 2012: 197-200. Koci Zdruli in one of his hand-written notebooks has written down his name in different songs. The latest year of his presence in Dardhë was 1954.

26. Fundo 2009: 57-61. Vaskë Kolaci. Personal Conversation. August 2012.

Mikaela Minga

Pandi Kuqka, bre vëlla,
Qe çirak u bë usta
Kapital na vuri shumë
Treqind kunguj përmbi lumë

Ky ortaku Nesti derri
Që njëndizaj pula therri
day

Me oriz na i gatoi
Pes'lek pjatën na i çmoi

Na u mblodhën gjith' hamajtë

Që të hanë nga një pjatë
Helbete se qe e lirë
Ku do gjeni më të mirë

Vajta un' të ha një pjatë
Po i thash' s'i kam paratë
Me pes' leka ha një pulë
Tundu shkundu Petro Dulë

Pa dëgjoni ç'i punova
Kur u ngrita edhe shkova
Pas Kanxherit u pengova
Dhe tenxheren ia rrëzova²⁷

Pandi Kuqka, o brother
Once apprentice, now master
Seem to have earned a big capital
Three hundred pumpkins in the
river]

His partner Nesti 'Pig'
Butchered some chickens yester-

day
Cooked them with rice
Five lek the plate was the price

All the workers gathered then

Eating a ration
Was cheap
Where one can find a better bet

I went to eat as well
I said have no money
With five lek you eat a chick
Move away Petro Dulë

Hear how I took revenge
when going out
Behind Kanxheri tripped
And the pan fell down

Pan - di Kuq - ka me vë - lla___ qe ç i - rak u bë us - ta___

⁵
ka - pi - tal na vu - ri shu - më pes - qind kun - guj për - mbi lu - më.

After Thanas Kondili, Kiço Sholla, Gjergji Peleshi, Ilkë Peleshi, Ilir Dishnica, Kiço Dishnica. Genci Kadilli. *Këngë humoristike*. [Songs Collection from *Serenata Korçare-Programme*. Tape 4], ca. 1994. Transcribed by Mikaela Minga.

Ecë të psonisësh
Më tha plak' e gjorë

Go shopping
My poor mother said

27. Thanas Kondili, Kiço Sholla, Gjergji Peleshi, Ilkë Peleshi, Ilir Dishnica, Kiço Dishnica. Genci Kadilli. *Këngë humoristike*. [Songs Collection from *Serenata Korçare-Programme*. Tape 4]. Audiocassette. Side B-Selection 7.

Dhe nja njëzet franga M'i vuri në dorë	And twenty francs Put in my hand
Të na blesh ca gjizë Dhe një tufë presh Kur të hash fasule Si fruta t'i kesh	Buy some curd Some leeks So when you eat the beans They will seem like fruit
Dola që nga vaji Edhe nga sapuni Vajta të marr lakra Edhe presh te Nuni	I came out from the grocery shop Buying all I need Looked then for some cabbage and leeks to Nuni
Vetëm bostanxhinjtë Janë zemërmirë Se ata t'i japin Preshtë me të lirë	Only the farmers are good They give you leeks With a cheap price
Në Gaqo Skënderi Merrna ca mish dhie Se ai pe shqerre Në anë s'na bie	In Gaqo Skënder Buy some goat meat Because the lamb Is very expensive
Po sapun o biro, Merrna ca më shumë Se na hëngër morrat U bë më për lumë ²⁸	But soap, son Buy some more When you have these lice you have to wash them away

28. Thanas Kondili, Kiço Sholla, Gjergji Peleshi, Ilkë Peleshi, Ilir Dishnica, Kiço Dishnica. Genci Kadilli. *Këngë humoristike*. [Songs Collection from *Serenata Korçare-Programme*. Tape 4]. Audiocassette. Side B- Selection 7.

Ec e të pso - ni - sësh,____ më tha plak' e gjo - rë,____

5 dhe të një - zet fran - gat,____ m'i vu - ri në do - rë.____

9 Të na blesh ca gji - zë dhe një tu - fë presh_____

13 kur të hash fa - su - le si fru - ta t'i kesh._____

After Thanas Kondili, Kiço Sholla, Gjergji Peleshi, Ilkë Peleshi, Ilir Dishnica, Kiço Dishnica. Genci Kadilli. *Këngë humoristike*. [Songs Collection from *Serenata Korçare-Programme*. Tape 4], ca. 1994. Transcribed by Mikaela Minga.

These satirical verses use very pungent ironic notes. Dustin Griffin points on satire can be helpful in commenting them. Griffin suggests not thinking of satire as simply a literary form, but as “a mode or a procedure” that can pervade different artistic forms. On the other hand, Griffin invites consideration of the ways satire is embedded in history and culture pointing out the roles that have factors such as the socio-economical status of the satirist and the social order.²⁹ These points help seeing beyond the “visceral laughter” that Petro Dula’s verses may cause and investigate the alleged connection with this order.

Petro Dula’s satirical verses engage in a social commentary that does not belong to an elaborated acculturated form but is still distinguished by an inflamed sensibility. The latter is rooted in the critical consideration of the social condition, the economic crisis, and how people engage with it. He explores aspects that take place in Korça’s market place³⁰ targeting different figures

29. Griffin 1994: 2-3

30. The name mentioned in songs were those of restaurant owners and merchants.

and events. These verses are inspired by the sense for the ridiculous that according to Zoja Pavlovskis-Petit, human beings develop for making fun one another. "Pointing a finger in derision", she says, "is the most elementary form of satiric expression."³¹ Contrary to her successive observation that, "the one who points makes a basic dissociation between his own superior character and behavior and those of others", Petro Dula is ironically self-inclusive in his satire verse and also in showing his belonging to a distinct social niche. This self-inclusive trait helps as well in identifying him as the author of the song.

The popular appeal of Petro Dula seems due to his performance ability. Dula articulated his verses as a presentational singable performance in the streets. His self-expressive vocation was articulated as a musical behavior. His lyrics evoke in my opinion, a critical posture that comes from less powerful individuals but that are still contentious in their role as "selflessly interested, shrewd observers"³² of the life-world of which they are part.

'Coda': Humor and the ironic consciousness

Referential for the humoristic song have been probably music parodies and comic sketches. The quasi-recitative vocal postures, the moderate fast and accentuated beats are the elements that distinguish the singing style in recordings. This expression is an outcome of a spontaneous force where seem to cohere either agencies coming from an acculturated class with elaborated structural writing forms or grassroots expressivities, distinguished for impetuous postures. Both display in my opinion the fundamentally social nature of humor, its incongruity, exaggeration, distortion, and unusual combination of cultural elements emerging through this song form.³³

31. Zoja Pavlovskis-Petit 2007: 512

32. Quentino 2007: 9

33. Apte 1985: 16

The humoristic songs have, in the background, 'articulative relationships'. The metaphorical 'couplets' brought up here aimed at displaying how they became expressive vehicles for particular agents in assuming critical postures pertaining to their life-world. The case of Petro Dula represents, in my opinion, the most interesting example in terms of the artistic abilities and his presentational approach. Dula rendered locally meaningful not only the expressive product, but also the embodied experience. Lastly, the special significance of the humoristic songs and their memorability is to be found in the articulation of an ironic-consciousness, which was for the most part self-reflective in its outlook and in its presentational manner.

Chapter 14

The Song and Self-Expression

Serenata was *dhembkë* (soreness); haven't you heard: Sing your *dhembkë*?¹.

They came from down the street; a small group of young guys; friends; they sang to girls they liked; Serenata was feeling; was love. That's why I loved the songs. And learned to sing them.²

These songs were not for the stage. They were too much about love. Maybe one or two have been performed now that I think. Yes, *Sofati*. I remember that because they made also a *mise-en-scène*, with a small *sofati* evoking the idea. Mihallaq Zallëmi [that is, a male tenor voice] performed it. In the introduction he sat at this *sofati* and then moved to the microphone. But it was artificial. Like a statue. A hymn. The song was not a hymn, but that time was like that. Another thing was when we sang it outdoors, for ourselves (*për qejfin tonë*). At the real *sofati*, nights after we had finished work. That had a complete different meaning.³

Nights together with other friends we sang, serenaded the girls. Singing was consolation (*ngushëllim*), relief (*çlodhje*).⁴

1. Ridvan Shëllira. Personal Conversation. August 2012.

2. Spanja Pipa. Personal Conversation. January 2011.

3. Spanja Pipa. Personal Conversation. August 2012.

4. Ilir Zenuni, oral comment transcribed from *Serenata Korçare-Programme*, Episode 3. Korçë: Radio Korçë, 1993.

These comments come from different performers I researched on. They turn continuously towards metaphors for describing the symbolic role of the song practice. In the 1950s-1980s period, *Këngë Korçare* seems to have represented a privileged site for self-expression and personal attachment. In this chapter, I would like to consider more in detail what this implied for the social reality. Thinking in terms the “social effect” of musical practices, that is,

the ways that music making participates in the very construction of agency and experience and the ways that the actions of individuals implicate them in continual renegotiations, not only of their musical practices, but also of the relations of power that organize their society⁵,

a broader comparative line with Albanian light music would be necessary. One main reason is the very constrained space for musical self-expression in the production of Albanian light music due to an overwhelming ideological saturation and state control. The other is a ‘stage related politic’ that the state controlled policies molded in the perception of any musical experience in Albania. The Festival of Light Song represents from this point of view a very impressive site for exploring this situation. I do not aim to write the history of the festival, but some background information would be necessary.

Albanian Light Song

The festival was a Sanremo-inspired model but it had to be in line with the state politics. It operated on an elaborated platform according to which in the final stage were usually included these song “categories”:

two songs for the Party, two songs for a specific anniversary, two songs for the Youth, two songs for socialism and its “works” [veprat], a piece for the National War [implying the partisan contribution in the second World War], song for the village or agrarian life, and then the block of ‘different subject-matters’ [tematika të ndryshme].⁶

The existence of a specific board was fundamental in the organization, especially in selecting and carefully controlling the pieces. The textual part (ar-

5. Sugarman 1997: 27

6. I am thankful for this information to Fatmir Hysi and Josif Minga.

ticulated as *tematika*, that is the subject matter) underwent careful and vigilant revisions and censorship. Love songs and intimate topics had a very ‘dubious’ status and usually were the main targets of modifications. The lyrics that fitted in the category of ‘different subject matters’ had usually “neutral” and “routine” themes such as pastoral subjects, or bestowing figures such as the mother, the teacher, or the child. Music comprised mainly captivating rhythms with an inclination towards epic and grand climaxes in song. This was also demonstrated by the preference for hymn-like songs and voice postures with a wide vocal range and an intensity of timbre that gave give a strong emphasis to the declamatory lines.

Due to these state-controlled strategies in song-making the Festival became object of different criticisms and political punishments for the artists right from the second year. Emblematic for the state control and the ramifications that the dictums of Enver Hoxha could have in this event was the case of the 11th Festival (Festivali i 11-të) in 1972. This event caused harsh criticism, ending with very dramatic punitive measures for the organizers. The staff consisted of a number of artists and state officials that had been distinguished for their more moderate outlooks, that is, the tendency to be more congruent with forms of self-expression and the dynamics of the quotidian realms.⁷ Consequently, they were also the ones that got the most severe punishment by imprisonment. “Lighter” repercussions affected many other members of the staff. This Festival represented one of Enver Hoxha’s most efficient scapegoats in the campaigns that targeted Albanian artists in the 1960s- 1970s.⁸

The songs of the 11th Festival moved away from the “subject matters” line and had in the background more intimate and quotidian stories. They were associated with Tiranë, with students’ life, and with places that during that period had been distinguished as centers of the social and interactive life. The

7. I would cite here: Todi Lubonja (the director of the Albanian RTV), Mihallaq Luarasi (theater director, stage director of the 11th Festival); Edi Luarasi (actress and speaker of the event), Sherif Merdani (popular singer). One of the main sources were the Italian Light Song and RAI programmes.

8. In the 1970s these campaigns took a very dramatic line: a large number of imprisonments included musicians, painters, poets, journalists, and theater directors. The most tragic was the case of two young poets: Genc Leka (b. 1941) and Vilson Blloshmi (b.1948) sentenced to death in 1977.

shift away from the “politically correct” song categories was held to be one of the main reasons for such criticism. This can be described as a sort of ‘crusade’ that reached the most extreme articulation in the 11th Festival, but that had started much earlier. It was a campaign that concentrated different efforts for reshaping the conception of an “individualized producer” in song, the “ego centered”⁹ focus that usually transpires through it as an expressive product. Instead, the operational devices opted for promoting those song models that could render either musically or textually the ideas on collectivity, masses, and the impressive development of socialism.

Starting from the mid 1960s, the space for individual expressions coming from a personal stance, or those from specific groups - unless, they were not previously controlled and “corrected” came to be more and more restrained. The song became a ‘creative product’ that belonged to the state expressive culture and the latter managed for its own needs the product and the creative contribution of its producer.

Reading self-expression

The repertoire of *Këngë Korçare* set up a dialectical relationship with the Albanian light song production as a song that responded to and fulfilled emotional needs¹⁰. These were outcomes of either spontaneous forms of creativity, or more structured and systematized forms. The individualized and personal stance is arguably one of the main rhetoric conventions ‘holding’ this form of song making. Illustrative of the dialectical relationship can be love ballads. The comment usually made by stage musicians when talking about this topic was: “këto këngë ishin *shumë* për dashurinë” (these songs were *too much* about love). In the word *shumë* (too much) that I have italicized, seems to be a sort of “portion” logic through which the songs about love had to be meas-

9. Marothy 1974: 6-7

10. Manuel 1988: 8

ured and controlled. And the first to exert such control seem to be in my opinion, the performers themselves.

The linguistic constructions of these pieces refer mostly to very intimate scenes that are sporadically heard in Albanian light songs. These pieces inform about emotions that can be linked with the “little world”¹¹, that is, personal experience of the quotidian realm; the “unmarked realities” of individuals’ lives, sometimes referring to commonplaces or banal situations. This is a text transcribed from a singable melody I recorded during fieldwork. It takes a slightly humorous posture about the military service:

Kam paralajmërimë, moj e dashura ime,
[They sent me a note, my love]
se me datën gjashtë, shkoj ushtar te lashë,
[That at six, I’m starting the military service]

Kokën ma qethën, më kontrolluan,
[They cut my hair, controlled me]
ushtar më veshën nga Korça më zbuan,
[as a soldier I left Korçë]

Letrat e tua, i mbaj, i ruaj,
[I keep and preserve your letters]
vuaj, e vuaj, të lutem më shkruaj,
[I suffer and suffer, please write]

Kur të këthehem nga ushtëria,
[When I’ll be back from the military]
prap do fillojmë ne nga dashuria
[Then we will begin our love again]¹²

11. This formulation derives from Fatmir Hysi’s notion of “little life” (jetë e vogël). In Hysi 2005: 43

12. Pandi Tabaku, Spanja Pipa, Ropi Tabaku. *Kënga e ushtarit*. Recorded by Mikaela Minga. 13 August 2012.

To this 'spontaneous' forms can be added more deliberate reflections revolving around loss, sadness, and death. The lyrics below represent a meaningful example for this. The contrast with the onstage models can be found first in the subject: the lyrics are about a prisoner and second in the mourning style of the ballad.

Vaj i mjeri si po digjem dhe po tretem në këtë vend
[Ah, poor me, I am ending my days in this place]
Rreze dielli nuk shoh kurrë, bot' as lule, asnjë vend
[Do not see the sun, no flower, no other place]
E kur çelsat e çementot, kan' rrethuar në këtë vend
[And when the keys, and the cement have surrounded this place]
Rreze dielli nuk shoh kurrë, bot' as lule, asnjë vend
[Do not see the sun, no flower, no other place]

Qeli, nat' e ditë, të mallkoj
[Jail, day and night I curse you]
Liri më e shtrenjta në botë
[Freedom, the dearest in the world]

Aman ndjen apo s'ke zëmër
[Do you have any feeling or do not have any heart]
Si po qan një djal i ri
[How a young guy is crying]
Dalngadal ja mbylli jetën
[He closed his life]
Burgu i tmerrshëm, burgu i zi
[In this horrible jail]

Lash' një nënë të vetmuar, që prej meje pret shërim
[Left my mother alone, waiting to be healed]
Lash një motër të parritur, që prej meje pret mësim
[Left my sister still a child, waiting for my attention]
Lash një lule të venitur, që prej meje pret lulëzim

[Left a faded flower, waiting for me to flourish]
Obobo gjith' këto mëkate, s'të vjen keq moj perëndi
[Ah, all these sins, don't you have a mercy, god]
[...]
Më tret jetën para kohe,
[You destroy my life]
S'të vjen keq për një të ri
[Don't have you mercy for one so young]
Mbush me shkronja, njolla, data
[Full with signs, letters, dates]
Muret tënde janë nxi'
[Your walls are covered]¹³

The character of these tunes evidences in many cases a romanticizing tendency. Idealized scenes are constantly found in song, yielding to prosaic expressions that become redundant and superfluous. The romanticizing imageries seem to be in one sense a sort of expressive “shelter”, a form of escapism in whose consumption the protagonists find some sort of consolation (ngushëllim). It is a distancing attitude of individuals to whom was denied public presentation of this expressivity in the ordinary life, and the impossibility to cope with this denial in “reality”. I would see this also as a “shelter”, as representing a sort of refusal, a rejection. Namely, the song was concentrated on self-expression, on the individual. Yet, it reflected the bonds to the social world.

13. Eli Fara. “Qeli” Music and lyrics attributed to Niko Stoja. In Eli Fara. *Nostalgji*. Tetovë: Shukoton [No serial number], ca. 1996. Track 6.

This song has been attributed to Niko Stoja, a self-taught guitarist and singer. It has autobiographic elements because Niko Stoja was imprisoned in the late 1960s. (Zhani Suljoti. Personal Conversation, July 2012; Vaske Gaqi. Online video Conversation, 15 August 2013). The musicians estimated that the piece entered the repertoire in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Kompleksi Fukara (Destitute Group)

Kompleksi Fukara was a song attributed to Vaskë Gaqi, singer and guitarist. He became active in the 1970s.¹⁴ The piece was disseminated by a group of friends with whom Gaqi used to perform often¹⁵, hence christening also the group with the same name.

Ishim ne të varfër sa më s'ka;
[We were very poor]
Emrin na e vun' Kompleksi fukara
[They called us the Destitute Group]
Gjetëm një kitar' të vjetër dhe të çar'
[We found an old and damaged guitar]
Ku ndjenjat hodhëm ne për her' të par'
[Where our feelings expressed for the first time]

Koha do na ndaj'.
[Time will divide us]
Kitara do na bashkoj'
[The guitar will join]
Kompleksi fukara
[The Destitute Group]
Gjithmon' do të kendoj'
[Will always live]

Nuk kënduam, nëpër skena ne
[We did not sing on stage]
Për vajza, bënim serene
[But for girls we serenaded]
Ndofta ndonjëherë në rrugë na kanë par'
[Maybe someone in the streets saw us]
Kur këndonim ëmbël me kitar'

14. Vaskë Gaqi (b. 1955). See Glossary.

15. The group consisted of Vaskë Gaqi, Landi Frashëri, Llazi Pano, Petrit Backa, Vangjush Shkurti, and Vangjush Koroveshi.

[When we used to sing sweetly with our guitar]

Mjegulla do bien

[The foggy days will go]

Zëri yn do t'i shpërndaj'

[Our voices will dissolve them]

Dhe tingujt që dalin

[And the sounds heard]

Nga kjo kitar' e çar'¹⁶

[From this damaged guitar]

The song transpires direct links with Albanian light music of that period. It is not a sentimental slow ballad. The text informs in different ways on this lived experience. The first aspect to be noted here is that the singers sing about themselves. They are the subjects of the song. Their self-expression helps understanding how individuals articulated a given social status that was their own. It illustrates the ways music making participated in the construction of agency.

Kompleksi Fukara communicates multifaceted emotional layers related to youth experiences, the offstage status of this music, and shortage. *Kompleks* names a small group of musicians that performed together. The name has direct links with Albanian light music where it usually denoted the background secondary voices that accompanied a song performance, or a small ensembles of singers. This association is more conspicuously articulated when they mention the offstage status (*nuk kënduam nëpër skena ne*) and locate themselves in the street and with the serenading practice (*dhe për vajza bënim serene, ndoshta ndonjëhere ne rruge na kan' par'*).

Fukara, a word of Turkish origins is translated as poor or destitute. It evokes a 'real' status of privation, hardship, and shortage. The negotiation of

16. Vaskë Gaqi. *Kompleksi Fukara*. Music and Lyrics by Vaskë Gaqi. 1971. Self made home recording by Vaskë Gaqi. Michigan (USA), 2003.

“everyday forms of resistance”, that is, with practices that “represent a form of individual self-help” but that “typically avoid any symbolic confrontation with authority or with elite norms.”¹⁹ As James Scott has rightly pointed out, these agencies should not be confined or reduced to singular acts or behaviors.²⁰ The meaning they enclosed needs to be read carefully, just like the experience integrated within.

Scott interpretation can be applied also to the expressive level. The lyrics avoid any symbolic confrontation. Instead of any direct contestation, *Kompleksi fukara* romanticizes the status of deprivation and offstage singing in “sheltered” in a nostalgic conception between the past and future. This is indicated by the change in verb tenses (underlined):

Ishim ne të varfër sa më s’ka;
[We were very poor]
Emrin na e vun’ “Kompleksi fukara”
[They called us the “destitute group”]
Gjetëm një kitar’ të vjetër dhe të çar’
[We found an old and damaged guitar]
Ku ndjenjat hodhëm ne për her’ të par’
Where our feelings expressed for the first time]

Koha do na ndaj’.
[Time will divide us]
Kitara do na bashkoj’
[The guitar will join]
Kompleksi fukara
[The Destitute Group]
Gjithmon’ do të kendoj’
[Will always live]

19. Scott 1987: 29

20. Scott 1987: 37 - 41

Kompleksi Fukara is an expressive reaction that connects the idea of concealment with forms of escapism; the refusal with forms of rejection. The outcomes of it belong and are emotionally consumed among a close group of people.

Për qejfin tonë (For our kefi, for our own amusement)

The intimate consummation of the songs was something that Vaskë Gaqi tended to clarify to me in our conversation. *Kompleksi Fukara* was not related to any form of opposition to the regime, nor to the social situation and to the critic of the offstage status. What they performed during that period – notwithstanding the song in question – were, he said, “për qejfin tonë” (For our own *kefi*; own amusement).²¹ Many musicians with whom I talked with have deployed this expression when it came to describe a situation of song performance that was intimate and that was shared among a close circle of individuals. ‘Për qejfin tonë’ or ‘për veten tonë’ in Spanja Pipa’s comments was about the performance of offstage songs, which she experienced differently from the onstage ones. The musicians attributed to this social event a very discreet and inconspicuous character. It belonged to forms of interactivity between a restricted number of individuals, mostly friends or kin.

I see this expression as “a situated deployment of [an] emotional linguistic form”²² that is elaborated by these social actors. The latter give to it this meaning and simultaneously this meaning is also exerted on them. Singing these songs “për qejfin tonë” joints the sense of belonging (*tonë*) with the local signified layers of *qejfi* (*kefi*, here related to emotional states of enjoyment, pleasure, satisfaction).²³ *Qejfi* comes out through verbal utterances. It is not related

21. Vaskë Gaqi. Online Video Conversation. 15 August 2013

22. Abu-Lughod, Lutz 1990: 13

23. *Qejf* (also *kefi*, *keyf*, *kayf*) is a broad notion that has a wide range of interpretations “in different areas and historical periods”. Jane Sugarman (1997: 359) provides a condensed but valuable bibliography of the case. For my discussion I have been referred more in particular to the contributions related to the regional geography: Sugarman 1997 (for the Albanian speaking groups); Caraveli 1982; Cowan 1990 and for a general interpretation to Despret 2004.

to ritual or celebrative ongoing events, neither to contexts of heightened emotion or elation.²⁴

Singing these songs was a way of “cultivating emotion”²⁵ through a texted vocal music. The latter is rendered meaningful in the course of a participatory performance. Its meaning is related to sincere expressions of individuality, however this self-expression becomes meaningful by interaction of producers and consumers; performers and audience. What should be underlined is that they do not talk about *qejf* as such, but about *their qejf*. The possessive determiner indicates the existence of certain boundaries, as opposed to the social and its expressive musical products. This self-expressive dimension is conceived by spending time in one’s own emotional way. By doing so, it opts for a “modicum of freedom”²⁶, for trying to resist or at least escape from the forces imposed in shaping and controlling an individual’s or a group’s life-world, leisure and the expressive consummation of musical products.

Nostalgia: A Few Last Words

In *Këngë Korçare* the pervasive evocation of longing, love, and sadness highlights the “grammars of nostalgia”²⁷. Use of specific words such as *mall* (longing, yearning) or *dhembkë* (soreness, fondness) fall into the ‘trap’ of emotionally imbued words that seem difficult to translate. This likens them to the chain of “magical” words such as *saudade*, *don*, *hâl*, *toska*, or *duende* that Eckehard Pistrick described as belonging to the “bittersweet” emotions. For his comprehensive classification, Pistrick draws on a psychoanalytic view:

It is sweet because the original object or event gave pleasure... It is bitter not only because it cannot be made to come back but also because, even in its original setting, it contained conflict and disappointment.²⁸

24. Sugarman 1997: 61; Caraveli 1982: 263

25. Despret 2004: 110

26. Peraino 2011: 9

27. Elliott 2010: 30

28. Castelnuovo-Tedesco 1980: 122. Cited from Pistrick 2012a: 60. Pistrick (2012a: 59-82) makes a comprehensive analysis of these terms.

The perspective of 'bittersweet' emotions and nostalgia produces however some sort of clash between local and universal qualities.²⁹ In discussing them by the perspective of "local knowledge" one cannot avoid the implications of interconnectedness, that is, the simultaneous parallels that can be drawn with other localities, situations, and experiences. In line with the "appreciation for interconnection"³⁰, I would like to quote a note by Richard Elliott regarding *fado* but that makes my point as well. "While there are particularities, he says,

that distinguish fado and Portuguese culture from other cultural forms, there are also qualities, which it shares with them. It might be more accurate to suggest that fado presents a localized form of culturally widespread (which is not to say universal) cultural practices and represents a localized form of historically widespread events and situations.³¹

In this rising recognition, it is the strength of "localized practices"³² and the deep meaning this emotional domain acquires for each locale the point of departure. The belonging to the local life-world and to a specific urban expressive culture does not however imply an insulated perspective. What's more, "nostalgia speaks in riddles and puzzles, so one must face them in order not to become their next victim - or the next victimizer."³³ This is the reason why in exploring 'nostalgia grammars' and the 'bittersweet' domain I will not stop in considerations on single verbal expressive vehicles³⁴ but consider them as integral to the emotional discourse on which the chapters in this part are focused.

Këngë Korçare as other urban-based repertoires (*fado*, *rebetiko*, or *klapa*) produced emotional verbal tools. Whether the lyrics are contributions from local poets or anonymous figures, the most important aspect of these texts is that the local patois intermingles with the elaborated poetic language, often to the point that it overcomes it.³⁵ In this corpus are incorporated linguistic con-

29. Elliott 2010: 29-30

30. Wolf 2009: 9

31. Elliott 2010: 30

32. Magrini 2003:20

33. Boym 2001: xvii

34. Cf. Elliott 2010: 13-64

35. This gains a certain significance also if one considers the intense cultural work that had been done from state authority for imposing in everyday life the standard language counter the local one (See Chapter Two)

structs that evoke different emotional states: love (*dashuri, sevda*); *qeif* (kefi), hope (*shpresë*). The most important ones are the ones that imply disquiet and sadness: *maraz* (concern), *brengë* (sorrow, sadness), *lot* (tear), *dhimbje* (pain), *merak* (worry, concern), loss (*humbje*). Pervasive in the text are *mall* (nostalgia, longing, yearning) and *dhembkë* (soreness, fondness). The latter is a substantive that comes from the verb *dhemb* (sore, hurt) with an added suffix *-kë* in a diminutive trait.³⁶ *Dhembkë* does not appear in song text. It is primarily employed by the performers as an emotional verbalization for expressing the personal meaning certain songs have to them.

In the text the most common temporal dimension is the night with its sceneries: darkness (*errësira*), dusk (*muzgu*), dawn (*perëndimi*). I suggest that what makes these elements consistent as a whole is the “sense of being in place”³⁷, that is, the experiential and expressive ways these places are known, lived, imagined, and voiced.³⁸ The integration of the city as a whole in this imagery asserts firstly the *in place* being. Metaphors of feminine anthropomorphic attributes in an imaginary dialogue between the ‘humanized’ city and the singers are employed in the lyrics of this stanza ballad.

O Korça ime sa je zbukuruar, Dielli, mori rrugën për në perëndim Muzgu hodhi vellon e natës mbi ty	O my Korçë, you are so graced The sun was in his way to sunset The twilight is settling down on you
Edhe freskia gjith' njerzit i ripërtërin	In the fresh air everyone feels good
O ti e vogla që rri në dritare	O you my love staying at the window
Pret që kitara për ty të këndojë Por jo, dot s'të fshihin ty perdet vallëzore Kur ti në heshtje këngën plot mall e dëgjon	Waiting the guitar to sing to you The curtains cannot hide you Hearing the song with yearn

36. The diminutive forms of the words, especially the endings with the vocal ‘ë’ are typical to the local patois of Korçë. See Zdruli 2011

37. Casey 1996: 17

38. Feld, Basso 1996: 11

O Korça ime sa shum' ke ndryshuar,	O Korçë, you have changed so much
Djemtë gjith' rininë kan' derdhur për ty	Young men dedicated their youth to you
Mbrëmjeve me të dashurat e tyre përqafuar	Evenings with their girlfriends
Ecën në rrugët e tua moj Korçë ³⁹	They walk in your streets o Korçë

Alongside the tribute to the city, this imagery informs in different ways about the relationship between an embodied musical experience and emplacement. Familiar events and protagonists (djemtë – male youngsters and the serenading) configure a sensed situated microcosm, in which the presence of the city's dweller/the I-narrator emerges continuously. The presence of the latter is stated by a mapping process he makes of the "image of the city" ⁴⁰, sorting out certain locations and integrating them in the songs' imagery. The one pointed here - the street (rruga) – is pervasive because is evoked in many song' texts thus informing about the outdoor status of this experience. From the street, the imagery moves to subtler components that the dweller/narrator identifies:

Me mall e kujtoj atë çast,	I recall that moment with <i>mall</i>
Kur së pari shikimet u ndeshën	When first we saw each other
Ai çast na lidhi	That moment joined us
dhe u deshtëm si asnjë tjetër	And we loved each other as no body else
[...]	
Dhe netët me yje si zjarr	And the starry nights
Ai këndi në lagjen e vjetër	That corner in the old quarter
Na lidhi kaq fort dhe u deshtëm,	United us and we loved each other

39. Petrika Zoga, Albana Troja. *O Korça ime*. Music and Lyrics by Thoma Lice. In *Serenata Korçare-Programme*, Episode 6, Song no. 10 in broadcast order. Radio Korçë, 1993.

40. Lynch 1990 [1960]

u deshtëm si asnjë tjetër⁴¹

Loved as nobody else

These places (lagjja e vjetër, këndi) are represented in song as sites of “fusion between self, space, and time.”⁴² An emblematic example for the case is the song *Sofati*. The perception of this place shows what Edward Casey calls a “literal configuration”, that is, the process through which “the form of a place [a big stone in this case] joins up with the shapes of the things in it.”⁴³ Longing for this place and its memorability seem then evoked each time this song had been performed, keeping thus ‘active’ and ‘alive’ the imagery.

The grammars of nostalgia that these urban songs produce have on the background place memorability. Yet, the ones that belong to the second half of the twentieth century do not follow any physical dislocation or displacement⁴⁴. What is more impressive is that the nostalgic is much more present in the songs of this period – that is, when the dwellers experienced a firm immobility - than in the first half of the twentieth century, when migration and erosion of forces were a quotidian reality for Korça’s people. This shows that any mind emotionally involved to the working of memory and loss can produce works structured by nostalgia⁴⁵. If memory has already been brought into discussion, loss in this case is related to the individual - alias the citizen, the dweller, the performer.

Nostalgia is engendered by the loss of the individual in the discursive ideology of masses, people and paternalistic politics. This loss means the inability, as Tuan suggests, to take control over one’s destiny.⁴⁶ Nostalgia is from this point of view “a romance with one’s own fantasy”⁴⁷ but this own fantasy belongs to an individual narrative biography that still seeks a group. The personal memory, therefore tries to cope with collective memory. The emotional

41. Naum Tërova. *Me mall e kujtoj atë çast*. In *Serenata Korçare-Programme*, Episode 5, Song no. 11 in broadcast order. Radio Korçë, 1993.

42. Feld, Basso 1996: 9

43. Casey 1996: 25

44. Cf. Pistrick 2012a

45. Elliott 2010: 49

46. Tuan 1977: 188

47. Boym 2001: xiii

state of the nostalgic is not strictly related to the past temporal dimension and neither to any future. These dimensions are often fused in song.⁴⁸ It is a song therefore that evokes a present state sheltered between past and the future. The loss of the individual and its forms of self-expression is what is trying to be remembered in song. The active preservation of these songs up to the 1990s displays the need for finding ways of remembering the individual and his/her being among other individuals.

48. See *Kompleksi fukara*.

APPENDIX I

Serenata Korçare [Korça's Serenata]

October – December, 1993

Reel tape: BASF LGR 50 MKI 1000m/6,3mm

Departamenti i Muzikës dhe i Programacionit i Radio Korçës

Radio Korça: Department of Music and Programming

Idea: Anesti Tili

Script: Artur Zonja

Technical support: Ing: Adriana Miska

Sound technician: Erifili Riza, Luljeta Poreçi Raimonda Xhoga,

Editor: Grigor Çani

Speakers: Zamira Kitta, Arjan Kallço

Members of the Jury:

Thoma Gaqi, Josif Minga, Ina Osmalli, Kostika Tanto, Riza Hysa, Boris Plumbi, Pandi Bello



Reel Tape from *Serenata Korçare-Programme*, August 2012 (I am thankful to Raimonda Xhoga).

Episode 1	Participants	Track list of songs in broadcast order	Guest Speakers
<p>Duration 1h: 10min</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pirro Suljoti 2. Mihallaq Andrea 3. Ermira Kola 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>I pabesë [Unfaithful]</i> Pirro Suljoti 2. <i>Kitar' e mandolin [Guitar and mandolin]</i> Mihallaq Andrea 3. <i>Ndarja [Separation]</i> Ermira Kola, Eugen Rezhda 4. <i>A e mban mend [Do you remember]</i> Mihallaq Andrea 5. <i>Vajzë pse rri e menduar</i> <i>[Why are you so pensive, girl]</i> Pirro Suljoti 6. <i>Stilografi [Fountain Pen]</i> Ermira Kola, Eugen Rezhda 7. <i>Netëve të Selanikut [Thessaloniki Nights]</i> Ermira Kola, Eugen Rezhda 8. <i>Eja, eja [Come, come]</i> Mihallaq Andrea 9. <i>Nënë hije të hënës rrije [In the moonlight shadow]</i> Pirro Suljoti 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anesti Tili 2. Thoma Gaqi 3. Pandi Bello 4. Stavri Botka 5. Koço Kondili (sponsor)

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Episode 2	Participants	Track list of songs in order of broadcasted appearance	Guest Speakers
<p>Duration 1h: 08min</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thanas Bicolli 2. Ermira Babaliu 3. Stefi and Endri Prifti 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Kalojn' ditët si ujrat e lumit [Days go by like the river flows]</i> Thanas Bicolli 2. <i>Merre zemrën time [Take my heart]</i> Thanas Bicolli 3. <i>Gjithmonë pranë teje kalova [Always near you]</i> Ermira Babaliu 4. <i>Dashuri e parë [First love]</i> Endri Prifti dhe Stefi Prifti group 5. <i>Margarita</i> Thanas Bicolli 6. <i>Përkëdhelje, puthje të zjarrta [Caress, lovely kisses]</i> Ligoraq Qano, Thanas Bicoll (ca. 1960 recording) 7. <i>Buzkorale [Coral lips]</i> Ermira Babaliu 8. <i>Lulja e saksisë [Flower in the pot]</i> Endri Prifti dhe Stefi Prifti group 9. <i>Lulja e majit [May flower]</i> Ermira Babaliu 10. <i>Pra eja, eja [So come, come]</i> Thanas Bicolli 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grigor Çani 2. Vasil Dishnica 3. Josif Minga 4. Pandora Vinjau 5. Adrian Petrollari (sponsor) 6. Ilia Vinjau

Episode 3	Participants	Track list of songs in order of broadcasted appearance	Guest Speakers
<p>Duration 1h: 14min</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Spanja Pipa 2. Ilir Zenuni 3. Devis Xherahu 4. Vaskë Jani 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Sado vite të ëmbël kaluam [The years we spent together]</i> Spanja Pipa 2. <i>Thellë në burgun e vetmisë [The loneliness prison]</i> Ilir Zenuni 3. <i>Mbrëmje në Korçë [Nighttime in Korçë]</i> Devis Xherahu 4. <i>Në syt' e tu [In your eyes]</i> Vaskë Jani 5. <i>Ti më erdhe në netët e qeta</i> <i>[You entered in my resting dreams]</i> Spanja Pipa 6. <i>Ç'm'i perdridhje buzet nazemadhja moj [Why do you act like this, o coquetry]</i> Ilir Zenuni 7. <i>Brengë [Longing]</i> Devis Xherahu 8. <i>Të të them je lule [You are like a flower]</i> Vaske Jani 9. <i>Qeni Postier [The postman dog]</i> Ilir Zenuni 10. <i>Në kopshtin plot lule qëndrova [The flowered garden]</i> Spanja Pipa 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tato Bimbli 2. Miço Plluska 3. Kostika Tanto

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Episode 4	Participants	Track list of songs in order of broadcasted appearance	Guest Speakers
<p>Duration 1h: 05min</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ornela Prifti and Koço Gliozheni 2. Thanas Kondili, Kiço Sholla, Gjergji Peleshi, Ilkë Peleshi 3. Dhorë Polena 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Përkëdhelje, puthje të zjarra</i> [Caress, lovely kisses] Thanas Kondili, Kiço Sholla, Gjergji and Ilkë Peleshi 2. <i>Sikur të deshte zemra jote</i> [If your heart yearned for] Ornela Prifti and Koço Gliozheni 3. <i>Ti në dritare</i> [You, at the window] Dhorë Polena 4. <i>Merre shpatën, shpoma zemrën</i> [Take the sword and punch my heart] Kiço Sholla. Thanas Kondili 5. <i>Kalojn' ditët si uj'rat e lumit</i> [Days go by like the rivers flow] Dhorë Polena 6. <i>Natën e mir'</i> [Goodnight] Ornela Prifti and Koço Gliozheni 7. <i>Pendimi</i> [Regretting] Thanas Kondili, Gjergji, Ilkë Peleshi 8. <i>Më zu malli për të pare</i> [Longing to see you] Ornela Prifti dhe Koço Gliozheni 9. <i>Kur dielli lind</i> [When the sun rises] Dhorë Polena 10. <i>Zeshkania</i> [Brunette] Thanas Kondili 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Riza Hysa

Episode 5	Participants	Track list of songs in order of broadcasted appearance	Guest Speakers
<p>Duration 1h: 04min</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Naum Terova 2. Mimoza Paraveli 3. Dhimitër Kreshova 4. “Djemtë e Bonbonerisë (Genci Kadilli, Kristaq Dishnica Ilir Dishnica) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Ky fustani jot' i zi</i> [Your black dress] Naum Terova (recording in a domestic setting) 2. <i>Ranë gjethet e pemëve</i> [The leaves have fallen] Naum Terova 3. <i>Këndo kitar' me mua</i> [Sing guitar with me] Mimoza Paraveli 4. <i>Vajzë ëngjëlllore</i> [Angel girl] Dhimitër Kreshova 5. <i>Në vetmi</i> [In the loneliness] Djemtë e bonbonerisë 6. <i>Përse më largohesh</i> [Why do you keep me away] Naum Terova 7. <i>Pa nënë</i> [Motherless] Mimoza Paraveli 8. <i>Ja po shkojnë dy të rinj</i> [Two youngsters go by] Djemtë e bonbonerisë 9. <i>Mos dashuro</i> [Do not love] Dhimitër Kreshova 10. <i>Hëna porsa ka dal'</i> [The moon has just appeared] Djemtë e bonbonerisë 11. <i>Me mall e kujtoj atë cast</i> [Long for that moment] Naum Terova 12. <i>Julisë</i> [For Julia] Dhimitër Kreshova 13. <i>Ah ti varfëri e mjerë</i> [Oh, misery] Mimoza Paraveli 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sotir Andoni 2. Fadil Alantar (sponsor)

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Episde 6	Participants	Track list of songs in order of broadcasted appearance	Guest Speakers
<p>Duration 1h: 12min</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Afërdita Zonja 2. Nusret Frashëri 3. Petrika Zoga and Albana Troja 4. Albert Bakllamaja and Ahmet Xhemo 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Vendosa vajzë të të dashuroj [I decided to love you]</i> Afërdita Zonja 2. <i>Lozonjare vajza ime [My playful girl]</i> Albert Bakllamaja and Ahmet Xhemo 3. <i>Desha të t'fjalos [Wanted to talk with you]</i> Nusret Frashëri 4. <i>Hidhërimi i jetës [The sorrow of life]</i> Petrika Zoga and Albana Troja 5. <i>O bilbil, bilbil [O Nightingale]</i> Albert Bakllamaja dhe Ahmet Xhemo 6. <i>Desha të rroja në vetmi [I wanted to live in loneliness]</i> Afërdita Zonja 7. <i>Trokit – trokit [Knock-Knock]</i> Nusret Frashëri 8. <i>Kitara ime vajto [Guitar Lament]</i> Petrika Zoga 9. <i>Sofati [Sofati]</i> Nusret Frashëri 10. <i>O Korça ime [O my Korça]</i> Petrika Zoga 11. <i>Streha e vjetër [Old Shelter]</i> Albert Bakllamaja 12. <i>Të dua fort [I love you so]</i> Klara Jovani 13. <i>Natën e mire [Good Night]</i> Afërdita Zonja 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Abaz Hajro

Mikaela Minga

APPENDIX II

Afërdita Zonja. *Desha të rronja në vetmi*. Synthesizer, Guitar, Guitar bass, Accordion

Afërdita Zonja. *Natën e mirë*. Synthesizer, Guitar, Accordion

Aferdita Zonja. *Vendosa vajzë të të dashuroj*. Accordion, Synthesizer, Guitar

Berti Bakllamaja. Pirro Viso. *Streha e vjetër*. Guitar. Accordion.

Devis Xherahu. *Brengë*. Synthesizer, Mandolin, Guitar

Devis Xherahu. *Mbrëmje në Korçë*. Guitar, Mandolin, Synthesizer

Dhori Polena. *Kalojn' ditët si uj'rat e lumit*. Guitar, Accordion

Dhori Polena. *Kur dielli lind*. Accordion, Mandolin, Guitar

Dhori Polena. *Ti në Dritare*. Accordion, Guitar, Mandolin

Endri and Stefi Prifti. *Lule ne saksi*. Synthesizer, Two Guitars, Oboe

Ermira Babaliu. *Gjithmonë pranë teje kalova*. Synthesizer

Ermira Babaliu. *Lulja e majit*. Synthesizer. Guitar

Ermira Kola, Eugen Grezda. *Netëve të Selanikut*. Guitar

Ilir Dishnica, Kiço Dishnica. Genci Kadilli (“Djemtë e bonbonerisë”)¹. *Ja po shkojnë dy të rinj*. Two Guitars.

Ilir Dishnica, Kiço Dishnica. Genci Kadilli. *Hëna porsa ka dal'*. Two Guitars

Ilir Dishnica, Kiço Dishnica. Genci Kadilli. *Në vetmi*. Two Guitars

Ilir Zenuni. *Thellë në burgun e vetmisë*. Two mandolins, guitar

Ilir Zenuni. *Ç'm'i perdridhje buzet nazemadhja moj*. Guitar, Two Mandolins.

Ilir Zenuni. *Qeni Postier*. Guitar. Two mandolins

Kiçi Sholla. Thanas Kondili. *Merre shpatën, shpoma zemren*. Guitar

Koço Glozheni, Ornela Prifti. *O Korça ime*. Guitar, Mandolin

Mihallaq Andrea. *Eja, eja*. Two Guitars. Synthesizer

Mihallaq Andrea. *Kitar e mandolina*. Two Guitars and Two Mandolins

Mihallaq Andrea. *Në Kinema*. Two guitars; Synthesizer

1. Boys of the candy-shop

- Mimoza Paraveli. *Ah, ti varfëri e mjerë*. Synthesizer, Guitar, Accordion
- Mimoza Paraveli. *Këndo kitar' me mua*. Guitar, Accordion, Bass Guitar, Synthesizer
- Mimoza Paraveli. *Kur del kjo hëna dhe ndriçon*. Guitar. Bass Guitar. Synthesizer.
- Mimoza Paraveli. *Pa nënë*. Synthesizer, Guitar, Accordion
- Naim Tërova. *Mos harro*. Guitar, Accordion
- Naum Tërova, *Ranë gjethet e pemëve*. Accordion, Guitar
- Naum Terova. *Me mall e kujtoj atë cast*. Buzkorale. Synthesizer, Guitar
- Naum Terova. *Përse më largohesh*. Guitar, Accordion
- Nusret Frasheri, *Trokit, trokit*. Pareja e vjetër. Accordion, Guitar, Contrabass, Guitar Bass
- Nusret Frashëri. *Desha të t' fjalos*. Guitar
- Nusret Frashëri. *Sofati*. Accordion, Two Guitars, Contrabass, Synthesizer (Performed from "Pareja e vjetër – Old Parè)
- Ornela Prifti, Koço Gliozheni. *Sikur të deshte zemra jote*. Synthesizer, Guitar
- Ornela Prifti, Koço Gliozheni. *Më zu malli për të parë*. Synthesizer, Guitar, Accordion
- Ornela Prifti, Koço Glozheni. *Natën e mir'*. Guitar, Synthesizer
- Petrika Zoga, Albana Troja. *Hidhërimi i jetes*. Synthesizer, Guitar, Accordion
- Petrika Zoga. *Kitara ime vajto*. Guitar.
- Piro Suljoti. *I pabesë*. Violins, Guitar²
- Piro Suljoti. *Jorgjica*. Accordion, Guitar
- Piro Suljoti. *Nënë hije të hënës rrije*. Guitar. Mandolins. Accordion
- Piro Suljoti. *Vajze pse rri e menduar*. Accordion, Guitar, Contrabass Mandolin (Performed from "Pareja e vjetër" – Old Parè)
- Pirro Suljoti. *Dje mbrëma*. Accordion, Violins, Guitar³
- Pirro Suljoti. *Për ty qan zemra ime*. Accordion, Contrabass, Guitar, Mandolin
- Robert Bakllamaja, Ahmet Xhema. *O bilbil, bilbil*. Synthesizer, Guitar
- Spanja Pipa. *Në kopshtin plot lule qëndrova*. "Pareja e vjetër": Accordion, Contrabass, Guitar, Mandolin
- Spanja Pipa. *Sado vite të ëmbla kaluam*. "Pareja e vjetër": Accordion, Guitar, Contrabass. Mandolin.

2. Reel Tape from Radio Korçë Archive, ca. 1960. (Cover of *Na te Mislim*.)

3. Reel Tape from Radio Korçë Archive, ca. 1960.

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Spanja Pipa. *Si ëndrra që vjen edhe shkon. "Pareja e vjetër"*, Accordion, Guitar, Contrabass.

Stefi and Endri Prifti. *Dashuri e parë*. Synthesizer. Two Guitars

Thanas Bicolli, Lirika Bicolli. *Pra eja, eja*. Guitar Thanas Bicolli. *Margarita*. Guitar

Thanas Bicolli. *Merre zemrën time*. Guitar

Thanas Kondili, Gjergji Peleshi. *Pendimi*. Guitar

Thanas Kondili, Kiço Sholla, Gjergji and Ilkë Peleshi. *Përkëdhelje, puthje të zjarrita*.

Guitar

Thanas Kondili, Kiço Sholla, Gjergji Peleshi, Ilkë Peleshi, Ilir Dishnica,

Kiço Dishnica. Genci Kadilli. *Këngë humoristike*. Guitars.

Thanas Kondili. *Zeshkania*. Guitar

Vaske Jani. *Në syt' e tu*. Two Guitars

Vaske Jani. *Të të them je lule*. Guitar

Glossary of musicians

Abaz Hajro (1930-1996) was an accordion player and songwriter. From 1960 to 1968 he was the leader of *Estrada* revue orchestra and played with different ensembles. Hajro came from the *Hajro* family of Roma Master Musicians. He took his first [European based] music lessons in violin. His most active period belongs to the 1960s, as stage music director and live musician in taverns and special events. Was fired from the *Estrada* revue in 1968 and since then worked in a shoe-factory. Playing music only in informal settings and among a close group of friends.

Afërdita Zonja (b. 1960) is a singer of light songs and *popullore* songs, nationally renowned. She is trained as a soprano. Came to prominence in the early 1980s in different Albanian song events. In the late 1980s, she showed a particular attention towards the performances of *Këngë Korçare* repertoire.

Agim Krajka (b. 1937) was successful composer, songwriter, accordion player and for a long time director of *Ansambli i Këngëve dhe Valleve Popullore* (National Folk Ensemble). He is author of many successful songs in the Albanian Festival of Song.

Agim Prodani (1928-1989) was a renowned composer of light music. Active in the *Estrada* revue and at the Radio beginning with the 1950s, he has been retained as one of the most prolific songwriters of that period. He wrote mainly love songs that have been popularized more in particular by two female singers Anita Take and Pavlina Nikaj.

Aleko Skali (1922-1980) was an actor, stage director, and lyricist. Studied at the French Lyceum. Worked in the *Estrada* revue and in the theater troupe. Appeared in a number of Albanian movies.

Dhimitër Kreshova, (Taçkë Karmeni) (b. 1922) was a self taught singer and guitar player of *Këngë Korçare*, Italian and Spanish popular songs of the 1930s-1950s. He performed in offstage settings. Worked as decorator.

Dhimitra Mele (1927-2009) was a renowned actress and singer in the city's theater from the 1960s up to the late 1970s. She counted many song performances with *Estrada* revue in the 1960s.

Dhori Polena (b. 1935) is a self-taught singer of *Këngë Korçare*, active from the 1950s. Worked at the bakery factory.

Eli Fara (b. 1967) is a singer of Aromanian descent. She started her career as a *popullore* song performer. Her first public performance dates in the Folk Festival of Gjirokastër, in 1983. She performed as soloist or in bi part songs accompanied by the *Saze* musicians or the *popullore* ensembles (*orkestrina popullore*). Until the early 1990s she performed mostly traditional songs from southeastern Albanian region or newly composed pieces. In the mid 1990s she recorded an album called *Nostalgi* (*Nostalgia*) with *Këngë Korçare*. Now she is a popular Albanian singer.

Ermira Babaliu (b. 1958) is a singer of light and *popullore* songs. She came to prominence on a national level in the early 1980s. She was among the first female performers to record and promote herself through *Këngë Korçare*. She recorded an album (ca. 1993) and disseminated the songs also by music videos (*videoklip*). Lives in the United States.

Genci Kadilli (b. 1962) and **Illir Dishnica** (b. 1958) known also as “Djemtë e bonbonerisë” are singer and guitarist of *Këngë Korçare* active from the mid 1970s. They recorded their first songs in 1993. Up to that moment they had not appeared in any presentational performance. Were renowned in participatory models of music-making, in informal settings.

Grigor Çani (b. 1967) graduated in composition in the Arts High Institute (Institute i Lartë i Arteve) in 1989. Started working as ‘music editor’ (*redaktor muzike*) in Radio Korçë in 1992. From 1993-1999 held the position of director of the Radio’s phonographic archive.

Fori Tërpini (1916-2008) was a self-taught singer and active in the city’s artistic societies in the interwar period. He was one of the eldest members of *Lira* group. Worked as a skilled economist in Trikotazh (Clothes Factory).

Hajro Hajro (1879-1943) was a *Saze* musician. Played the violin. In the late 1920s he founded the group “Demka&Hajro” together with his son Abedin Hajro, known as Demka (1904-1967). Together with other *Saze* musicians they were one of the most renowned groups of that period. Some of their songs were recorded and issued on 78rpms.

Ilia Vinjau (b. 1937) songwriter and singer of *Këngë Korçare*. He was a geologist in profession. Few of his songs were performed on local Festivals in the 1960s. One of

the most popular ones was *Gjeollogia* (1965). The others pieces circulated among parè-group of friends in informal settings and were firstly recorded in 1993.

Ilir Zenuni (b. 1955) was a singer, songwriter and guitarist. Worked in the shoe factory.

Jorgaq Nano (b. 1945) graduated as choir director in the Arts High Insititute (Institute i Lartë i Arteve) in 1968. Worked as music responsible in the House of Culture and as teacher in music theory and accordion in “T.T. Koço” High School of Arts. In 1979 he took the lead of *Lira* group after. Held this position until 2009.

Jorgjeta Lalazi (b. 1958) attended “T.T.Koço” High School of Arts for a brief period. Until the early 1990s she performed on stage and on various ‘special events’ occasions. Now she is a professional singer of *Këngë Korçare* in live performances in the city taverns.

Josif Minga (b. 1953) is an Albanian composer. Graduated in the High Institute of Arts in 1974. Since 1978 was the artistic director of the city’s state-folk ensemble. From 1987 to 1993 worked as ‘free professional composer’. He is the author of many Albanian *popullore* and light songs. Has written also an opera, orchestra and instrumental pieces.

Koço Lalazi (b. 1956) is a singer and guitar player of *Këngë Korçare*. Has self-taught musical skills. Until 1990 worked as a skilled technic in “Trikotazh” (Clothes factory).

Kostaq Osmalli (1908-1984) was a music director and composer. Studied music theory in Bucharest (1934-1938). Active musician in Korçë since the 1920s. Conductor of Mitropolia choir from 1930 to 1965. Music director of *Lira* group from the mid 1950s up to 1979. Worked as a teacher in the Pedagogic High School (Shkolla e Mesme Pedagogjike) up to 1974. Osmalli was the first song collector and arranger of *Këngë Korçare* and the historic artistic leader of *Lira* group.

Kristo Kono (1907-1991) was an Albanian composer. Got his first music studies with Thoma Nassi, then in Paris, where he studied clarinet. He graduated in 1932 in “Giuseppe Verdi” Conservatory of Music (Milan). In 1936 settled again in Korçë to work as music teacher and band leader. From 1946 served in different official positions. From 1962, Kono worked as a ‘free professional composer’ paid by the state. The major contributions belong to the 1950s and 1960s with opera, operetta, mass songs, instrumental, and orchestra pieces.

Ligoraq Qano (1935-1991) was a self-taught musician. Graduated in the Artistic Lyceum (Liceu Artistik) in arts and then attended the university studies in history-geography. Worked as teacher. Performed with his own group of friends who attribute to him a number of songs of the 1950s' and 1960s' *Këngë Korçare* repertoire.

Mihallaq Andrea (b. 1949) is a singer and songwriter. Worked in the uzine e instrumentave. Engaged in 'amateur troupes' of factory and performed with on different song events in the late 1960s. Was locally renowned for his performances of *Këngë Korçare* but did not perform them on stage. In the early 1990s, he was one of the first singers to revive and record the repertoire on a national level. From this period and on has performed mainly this repertoire.

Mimoza Paraveli (b. 1970) is a popular singer. She started her professional career as performer of *Këngë Korçare*, songs that she recorded in her first cassette album (ca. 1998).

Nevruz Nure, known as *Lulushi* (1954-1990) was one of the most prominent Roma-Gyptian musicians from Korçë, active from the 1970s. He played on the accordion, the violin and the clarinet, but was distinguished primarily for the clarinett playing. He rendered the instrumental repertoire of *Saze* and accompanied many traditional songs. He played on stage and on 'special events'. His most famous soloist piece is the *Kaba* in G (Kabaja në Sol), known as *Lulushi's Kaba*. Nevruz Nure was an emblematic musician retained from many Master clarinet players as one of the best *Saze* musicians of all times.

Niko Stoja (b.1947) was a self taught guitarist and singer. Worked at Trikotazh (Clothes factory). Lives in Greece.

Nusret Frashëri (1938-2007) was a singer and guitarist of the *Estrada* revue troupe. He came from Roma (Gyptian) descent. Performed light songs from the 1950s and 1960s, and *Këngë Korçare*.

Pandi Tabaku (b. 1941), **Gjergji Peleshi** (b. 1935), **Thanas Kondili** (b. 1935) were self-taught guitarists and singers of *Këngë Korçare* performing usually as a *parè* group. They were skilled as technician and worked in the city's factories.

Pandi Tasellari (b. 1933) is a guitar and mandolin player. He was among the earliest *mandolinata* players of *Lira* group. Accompanied the most part of the recordings of *Këngë Korçare* from 1950 to 1994.

Pavlo Sholla (1923-2003) was a music director and songwriter. He had Aromani descent. In the period between the 1950s up to the late 1980s, he directed different folk state ensembles in the city and musical groups held in factories and in schools. He is the music author of many *popullore* songs' in the 1970s and 1980s.

Ligor Papakristo alias **Petro Dula** (1915-1959?) was a self-taught musicians. Performed songs in the street accompanied with guitar. Became particularly known for the "Humoristic Songs", pieces with satirical verses performed usually in the city's streets. Worked as cook and baker. He accompanied his songs with guitar.

Pirro Suljoti (1924-2011) was a self-taught singer. Had a tenor voice posture. Participated in different choral groups and as singer soloist in Radio Korça ensembles in the 1950s-1960s. His family was renowned for singing *Këngë Korçare*. He used to sing them in various informal occasions, being distinguished for his own repertoire.

Qerime Bakiu (1898? -1968) was a Roma-Gyptian female singer of traditional songs and *dajre* (framed drum) player. She has been considered as one of the most prominent performers of this repertoire in her time. She was hired to play and sing at weddings, in celebrations. She performed with *Saze* musicians and was among the few female voices to be recorded in discs in the 1930s.

Ridvan Shëllira (b. 1935) is a self-taught singer of *Këngë Korçare*. He is active from the early 1950. Entered the *Lira* group in 1981. He was skilled as constructing technician and was also a football player.

Sotir Kozmo (1900-1944?) attended high music studies in Bucharest. Came in Korçë in the early 1920. Worked as conductor, music teacher, and manager of concert and tours. He was very active in promoting concert performances by highly European trained musicians and operatic singers such as Tefta Tashko Koço, Lola Gjoka. For a brief period was also director of Radio Korçë. Died in Italy in unclear circumstances.

Sotiraq Mite (1926-1956) was a songwriter and singer. Played on the mandolin, guitar and accordion. Graduated from the "Arts Lyceum" (Liceu Artistik) in Tiranë. The friends of his generation attribute to him a number of songs from *Këngë Korçare*.

Spanja Pipa (b. 1938) was a singer and actress in *Estrada* revues and the theater "Çajupi" troupes. She started singing onstage in the late 1940s. The most successful period was that of the 1960s, as artist of the *Estrada* Revue troupe. She performed in Radio performances and in various informal settings.

Tefta Tashko Koço (1910-1947) was a highly trained soprano. Studied in Montpellier, Paris and Rome. With the exception of two opera roles, she performed and recorded mainly urban songs of the 1930s shaping and establishing an Albanian song repertoire. Her legacy has been influential for the generation of singers coming after her.

Thanas Bicolli (1938-2001) was a singer of *Këngë Korçare* and guitar player. He worked as a teacher. He was among the group of friends that youngster that recorded in the 1960

Thoma Nassi (1892-1964) was an Albanian-American musician. He was a composer, director of orchestras, choirs, *mandolinata* ensembles and brass bands. Migrated in the United States in the early 1910s. Studied music at the *New England Conservatory of Music* (1914-1918). Became very active in the music activities of the American-Albanian diaspora beginning with 1916. He came back in Albania in 1920. In the history of Albanian music, he is known particularly as leader of "Vatra" brass band and as promoter and organizer of musical activities in the city of Korçë (1920-1925). He is also author of a number of songs that have been integrated in *Këngë Korçare* repertoire. Left Albania in 1926 and lived in the United States for the rest of his life.

Tole Adham (1913-1998) was a singer that gained popularity for his performances of *Këngë Korçare* in live concerts and through Radio broadcastings. He was among the earliest members of *Lira* and the main tenor soloists of the group's repertoire.

Vasil Dishnica (b. 1924) was sound technician in Radio Korçë from 1941 to 1985. Assisted the Italian engineer for erecting the Radio Antena and the Radio Station in Korçë and successively was trained as sound and broadcasting engineer.

Vasil Çezmaxhi, also known as Cilo Qorri (1887-1953)) was a renowned *Saze* musician active from the early 1900s. He performed traditional repertoire in wedding celebrations, taverns, and bars. Played the kaval, bouzouki, and the clarinet.

Vaskë Gaqi (b. 1955) is a singer and songwriter. Became active in street and serenading performances in the early 1970s. Worked as a construction engineer. He has written many pieces that belong to *Këngë Korçare* repertoire. Lives in Michigan (USA) since the 1999.

Vaskë Kolaci (b. 1934) was violinist and music teacher. Took the first music lessons with Iro Filipidhou (Cico) a violin teacher of Greek origins. Graduated as non-enrolled student (nxënës i jashtëm) of the Artistic Lyceum (Liceu Artistik) in Tiranë,

in 1962. Was one of the founders of “T.T. Koço” High school of Arts and an active musician with the city’s ensemble from 1952 to 1974. In 1975 was deported by the regime together with his family ending the music activity.

Viktor Çani (b. 1933) took the first music lessons in guitar and then contrabass. Became active as contrabass player beginning with 1948. Played with different musical ensembles. From 1960 to 1967 was member of the *Estrada* Revue orchestra. Afterwards worked as teacher of contrabass in “T.T. Koço” High School of Arts.

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