


TAMAZ GABISONIA

Ilia State University, 

tamaz.gabisonia@iliauni.edu.ge

orcid.org/0000-0001-8993-6662

Georgian Songwriter's Folk Song of Soviet Epoch as a Victim of "Authenticism"

ABSTRACT

Mass character and class reference of Soviet art quite easily echoed collective and national priorities of Georgian folk song. In addition, the authority of renowned singers and organizers of choirs was an important factor for preserving the originality in Georgian colonial cultural life, even before the establishment of Soviet Power. From the second half of the 19th century these popular leaders – choir masters – created their own versions of folk songs, as well as composed new songs, most of which, despite clear stylistic individualism, are considered 'true folklore' by the lovers of authentic folklore today.

However, the songs composed by well-known choirmasters in the second half of the 20th century, are demonstratively rejected by the folklore elite, including official structures, for being 'nonfolklore' and 'low quality'. But, stable popularity of these songs in cities and villages, provides very strong evidence of their artistic and stylistic relevance.

Thus, the policy of 'ignoring' could be attributed to the maximalist understanding of 'authentic' performance of folklore accompanying the national-independent movement in the 1980s, which introduced an important cultural phenomenon of 'revolutionary' protest in Georgian ethno-musical space. A similar tendency echoes the parallel realities of post-Soviet countries and today's fashionable 'taboo' of 'all things Soviet', regardless of the verbal thematic of the examples.

In the inertia of these vicissitudes, currently the practice of creating a song with ethnic coloring is dissociated from 'authentic' folk author-performers. But when it comes to the skill level and traditional style, this suggests mostly inadequate results in a banished, but free space.

The article discusses the boundaries and accessories of the concept of "folk song", its accordance with Georgian traditional musical style, and the problems related to this topic. Also presented is the classification scheme of Georgian musical styles based on contemporary data.

KEYWORDS

Georgian folk songs

Authenticity

Author song

Ethnomusicology

Received: November 22, 2019; **Accepted:** December 07, 2019

In addition to the formation of the civil consciousness, Georgian folk music and ecclesiastical chants serve as important factors for ethnic identification. Namely, in the second half of the 19th century, when the fight against Russian colonial policy ended unsuccessfully, preservation and development of Georgian culture, particularly, original Georgian song and chant became one of the major directions of self-preservation. This movement was largely presentational – expressed in activities on the stage, this trend has been the basic form of folklore life to this day.

It should be said that the establishment of Soviet Power changed the Government's attitude to Georgian folk song for the better. The ethnic component adjusted the role of a class component. The emphasis was made on people's, rural, and peasants' songs, which were presented naturally in an 'ethnic' aspect. 'National in form, socialist in content' – is the most adequate slogan in the time and place, where the two sides of the medal: ethnical and social are concurrently implied through the notion of 'among the people'. The ethnic side plays the role of the obverse: despite the fact that the state was proclaimed as a workers' and peasants' state, folk art of the working class was suppressed by that of the peasantry, as the latter was more traditional in agrarian Georgia. Accordingly, the music of the new times – Soviet music – was actually constructed within the folk-style framework.

The idea of Soviet art as artistic training of masses, i.e. its massive character, corresponded with the 'folk taste' of Georgian people. The main requirement for new or rearranged works – optimism saturated by the idea of Communism – also provided a place for old, traditional songs. The latter tendency made the 'democracy' of the Soviet Government 'transparent', and seemingly far from class and ethnic oppression. The motivation of folk performers – the pride aroused by the performance of national treasure before a large audience of fraternal nations (and on a narrow scale – healthy competition of Georgia's different regions at festivals or inspections) is truly noteworthy.

From today's perspective, this mass character had its advantages and disadvantages: on the one hand, it increased patriotic attitude to national song as compared to Tsarist times (folk choirs functioned in almost all large groups); new interesting genres were created (conversation of a young woman and man, eulogistic songs, potpourris); on the

other hand, the creative approach, rituals, genres, norms of individual, family, and ensemble performance were lost in mass choirs (sometimes with tens of members) during each performance. Today we can vaguely esteem the encouragement to create new – the choirmasters were obliged to eulogize new patriotic objects.

In this way, even though the leaders during this epoch imagined their times as ‘paradise’ for folk music, it was more of a ‘purgatory’ wherein folk music was ‘wrapped’ for stage performance. On stage, folk collectives gave initiative to a person. This is why the notion of ‘author’s song’ (Gabisonia, 2014: 35) is topical for the new creations of the period. It is interesting that, from the Tsarist period, personal factors are better manifested in the arrangement of rural-style songs than in urban-style examples.

Can a ‘songwriter’s’ (by person, author) song be folk? The notion of ‘folk’ is perceived as ‘having shared, or collective authorship’ and / or ‘traditional folk style’. The social predicate of the first notion is smaller than the ethnic predicate of the other. At the same time, the criterion of ‘folk’ as a creative method (which today can also imply performance of popular traditional American jazz works by the Georgians, under ‘folk’) is less relevant today than the criterion of ethnic tradition formed in the diachrony of this method. Therefore, the notions of ‘songwriter’s’ (i.e ‘composed’, author’s’) and ‘folk’ song are perfectly compatible, and both reflect individual creations based on the traditions of ethnic collective creativity.

‘Songwriter’s (author’s) song without the predicate ‘folk’ implies the not-so-ambitious creativity of self-taught composers without the collective stylistic component. It should also be noted that the term ‘author’s song’ often implies the songwriter’s individual performance as well. But considering the Georgian tradition of joint singing, we, first of all, consider composing rather than performance.

As for the notion ‘folk composer’, it is somewhat delicate in relation to folklore. According to traditional accepted convention, the notion ‘composer’ denotes not only the person having academic education and / or professional composing technique, but the artist engaged in academic or elite professional music style in general.

So, who creates folk or songwriter's folk song? – the Choirmaster. This notion has been introduced to Georgian music from chant – the space of professional art, and well-adjusted to the function of a folk musician as a leader.

We can distinguish four stylistic directions of Georgian 'songwriter's folk song':

1. Songwriter's music created by Georgian choirmasters and adjusted to the traditional Georgian style. This tendency, originated in the second half of the 19th century, still continues. It is oriented towards traditional folk melodies, types of vocal movements and performance methods;
2. Soviet patriotic songs, with distinctive artistic means of expression and distinct enthusiastic style;
3. Folk-style songs composed by choirmasters, which create new standards and shape the melodies by using elements of Georgian intonation and articulation;
4. Folk-style songwriter's works created by self-taught performers, often enriched by modern electronic arrangements.

In this paper we focus on the third paragraph as a sort of 'oppressed' stratum. In the case of the first example in this list, the authors did not seek copyright, and these pieces are still considered folklore and are well-received by Georgian and foreign listeners. The second example is buried in oblivion for its ideological content, and the fourth one – even though not encouraged by the folklore community, is nonetheless able to attract a fairly large audience. It can be said that this modern self-taught songwriter's music is only a small share of the stylistic traits of Soviet songwriter's folk music, which it has inherited; it essentially replaces them with new artistic ideas, which are difficult to consider as a 'new, developed stage'.

Thus, we focus on the layer of the songwriter's folk songs from the Soviet era, imprinted by choirmasters' skillful individualism. Accordingly, they can be referred to as 'the songs of the Georgian choirmasters'.

From the four phases (Tsurtsunia, 2010: 625) of the development-mutation of Georgian folk song, this subtype – songwriter’s folk song, with its original stylistics – can be distinguished as developing in parallel to traditional song.

It is noteworthy that one of the most adequate examples of Georgian songwriter’s folk song is perhaps the most outstanding symbol of Georgian folk music – ‘Suliko’ with Varinka Machavariani-Tsereteli’s ‘Suliko’.

The number of connoisseurs of such songs has gradually decreased. The generation, which created and taught songwriter’s songs, is mostly derogated; some of its representatives remain unmotivated today. However, these songs still retain some popularity, and the number of their listeners on the Internet serves as a testament to this. The segment of the ‘choirmaster’s songs’ mostly encompasses vocal-instrumental educational folk groups surviving in the provinces.

Local direction of self-taught authors has a solid segment of admirers, which is manifested mostly in songs with simple structures accompanied by the panduri (Kenchiasvili, Kumsiashvili, the Gogochuri sisters). Due to the intolerant attitude of ‘folklore legislators’, such searches, or the abundance of artistic or expressive means are not distinguished in riches. However, there also are some improved arrangements easily projected on panduri, and some examples of modern popular music genres, on guitar.

In all the afore-mentioned directions, low quality ‘Kitch’ type songs, with temporary Schlager success (group Bani, trio Mandili, Elieshvili, the Zviadauri Sisters, and the Naqauri Sisters) are still created alongside artistically interesting songwriter’s songs. This is natural and we should not be shaken by such cases when criticizing this direction. In general, we consider ‘parafolklore’ (Gabisonia, 2014: 39) the topical term to denote this pseudo-folk kaleidoscope’. It should also be noted that there is a space of intersection for ‘choirmaster’s songs’ and other songwriter’s songs, based on folk motifs. One way or another, whether we want it or not, today such innovative style performers form a stylized portrait of the Georgian tributary of ‘World Music’ alongside traditional folk-style Georgian music. I agree with Anna Piotrowska, who notes that "authenticity of traditional music is reborn in the form of world music" (Piotrowska, 2010: 582).

From an axiological standpoint, the antipathy of folk tradition, appraisers of modern self-taught authors' songs are easily understandable, but what causes protestant attitude to choirmasters' songwriter's songs, which have better professional level and are closer to folklore tradition?

A large faction of the Georgian folkloristic 'establishment' does not consider songwriter's folk songs authentic. Some believe that the main disagreement between songwriter's folk songs and 'authentic' examples is their 'non-anonymity' and 'non-folk' style. Anonymity is often understood as forgetting only the author and not as the nescience of basic or primary author. However, even from this standpoint, many songwriter's songs are anonymous! As for the style, the main thing is that noticeable should be its growth from the tradition; 'propriety' or 'impropriety' of this branch, as 'canonical versions' (Garaqanidze, 2017: 79) can not be predicted.

The policy of 'ignoring' songwriter's songs can be attributed to the 'renaissance' of authentic folk performance accompanying the National-liberation movement in Georgia in the 1980s. Here, we imply the searches of Edisher Garaqanidze and his like-minded people from ensembles Mtiebi, Mzetamze and Anchiskhati, whose main priorities were to arouse interest to traditional repertoire, performer's status and method of performance.

It is not surprising that similar authentic trends are echoed in the realities of other post-Soviet countries, and coming from a nationalist, often anti-Russian sentiment, frequently forms a fashionable 'taboo' of 'all things Soviet'.

The apology of authenticity in the Georgian ethnomusicological space has introduced 'revolutionary' protest to many significant cultural phenomena. Oriental instrumental music (Duduki, Zarna, Doli), bayatis, and partially, city songs, are sacrificed to the ignorance caused by revolutionary maximalism. The 'Search for roots' obliges traditional music performers to create only versions of the existing examples. Novelty is measured by the presentation of melodious or harmonious multi-sound phrase in a new manner.

What did the folklore 'purists' forbid: authorship, style, or new form? Apparently, all three. But it is more likely that the followers of songwriter's song developed massive stylistics, which the 'authenticists' fought against. The main markers of those, who

deviated from the “path of Authenticity”: mass character, performance of top voice parts by several singers, chromatic instruments, and songwriter’s repertoire.

On the other hand, stage reproduction of authentic examples with the consideration of the conditions of indirect, natural development, does not reveal more legitimacy on the part of songwriter’s song. Domestic attributes of the genre are lost in both; if here stylistic diversity flows from the diversity of dialects, there – it is formed by personal individualism, which is an immanent peculiarity of the postmodern epoch. The listener’s emic factor is also to be considered: choirmasters’, as well as self-educated songwriter’s songs are clearly perceived as ‘folklore’ by their admirers. In general, identification of events in cultural mosaics is more relevant than their axiological consideration.

It is interesting that the personal factor is the most important in the surviving variants of Georgian chants. This refers to the Karbelashvilis’ gamshveneba (prolongued singing of syllables), as well as to Khundadze’s and Nikoladze’s methods of vocal tuning and Nakashidze’s consonants in the Shemokmedi mode (Gabisonia, 2015: 153).

The events parallel to ‘folk authentization’ developed in Georgian ecclesiastical music practice as well. Facing the traditions in this space was expected to result in a stricter, and more conservative approach to the heretofore existing practice, than in singing space. However, the severity of prohibitions in these two directions insignificantly differed from each other.

In 2003 the Synod of the Georgian Orthodox Church adopted the resolution that only traditional hymns should be chanted during the Divine Liturgy. This position slowly killed the eclectic ‘Sioni’ style, as well as the hymns composed by individual professional, and self-taught authors (Kechaqmadze, Kochlamazashvili, Berishvili, Garaqanidze). However, in this regard, the hymns composed by Patriarch Ilia II are, in fact, violators of this resolution. But the patriarch’s practice has not been widely spread.

One way or another, the practice of songwriter’s chants in Divine service has already suffered a failure in Georgian liturgical space, and seems to have no prospect in the near future either.

Earlier we identified traditionality and rural culture as the main criteria for the authenticity of Georgian folk song (Gabisonia, 2014: 28); traditionality is the main feature of folklore in general (Zemtsovsky, 1977: 71; Anikin, 1997: 225).

What are basic stylistic markers for songwriter's folk songs? First of all, expansion of melody under the conditions of homophony should be emphasized here. On the other hand, the repetition of the ending phrase is also noteworthy; it is also important to make a clear distinction between the parts of soloists and choir, and increase the size of the soloist's part; an important factor is also the instrumental accompaniment, which alongside adding folk timbre-rhythmic coloring to the piece, 'enriches' it with the colors of harmonic functionalism - most distinguished among them is major-minor alternation. From this standpoint, the alternation of major and minor sixths (rather than that of major and minor thirds) is very characteristic of this style, as are the elements of the so-called 'Pshavian mode' (Phrygian mode with a raised sixth). It can be said that the trend of hybridity, which started in Georgian folklore in the 19th century and developed in two directions - European and Asian, is presented in choirmasters' songs with the elements of European harmony.

In songwriter's songs the dominance of Eastern homophony over Western polyphony is significant. However, in both cases, the melody is on the foreground, indicating that for people polyphonic musical texture is not as topical as melody. And the basic sign of songwriter's songs is a long melody with dramaturgical order.

From the socio-genre point of view, songwriter's folk song puts the love theme on the front line. Patriotic motives are also ponderous.

What stylistic associations do songwriter's songs have with traditional Georgian folk songs? One of the most striking musical analogies here is the cadence on the fifth reaching the tonic of the sixth and seventh steps ('Georgian Dominant' Chkhikvadze, 1961: 8). This, as well as parallel movement of top voice-parts is characteristic of Georgian folklore of later time in general (Chkhikvadze, 1981: 4), where top voice-part determines major-minor mode.

From the timbre standpoint, one of the most significant features of such a song is the panduri – the truly most democratic Georgian instrument, which, for its function, can be

called 'Georgian Guitar' (in this sense the chonguri is less popular). The role of chromatic instruments is significant for the popularity of songwriter's songs. Traditional examples and innovative harmonic modulations can be easily performed on a chromatic panduri. Traditional and chromatic panduri and chonguri do not differ from each other in terms of sound, appearance, manner of playing and rhythmic configuration.

Not only chromaticization, but also the creation of instrumental orchestras (Vashakidze's initiative in the 1930s-40s) established an exclusive, only 'creative machine' for folk music, where new ideas originated and old creative ideas were processed.

In general, it should be said that the development of distinctively ethnic Georgian song in Soviet Georgia was differentiated based on the performance location and types of performers, which resulted in the ramification into the following directions (the chronology is adhered to as much as possible):

- Songs for folk ensembles and choirs (D. Lolua, V. Simonishvili, A. Erkomaishvili, V. Mchedlishvili, Gr. Kokeladze);
- Songs for folk-style performers;
- Songs for a string-instrumental (guitar, panduri, chonguri) trio (quartet or duet): The Ishkhneli sisters, Mirianashvili, The Chikhladzes, I. Gurgulia, R. Sebiskveradze, N. Dughashvili, N. Gabunia, J. Sepiashvili, L. Gegelia, D. Turiashvili, I. Bobokhidze, E. Chelidze;
- Songs for solo singers – R. Laghidze, G. Tsabadze, B. Kvernadze, V. Azarashvili, V. Durglishvili, N. Ergemlidze, J. Sepiashvili, Z. Mzhavia, etc.;
- Songs for films;
- Songs for vocal-instrumental ensembles – V. Durglishvili, A. basilaia, r. Bardzimashvili, S. Ebralidze, Kitishvili;
- Songs performed by songwriters ('bards') – I. Gurgulia, M. Menabde;
- Songs for academic performers;

- Folk- and ethno jazz/rock/electronic music (Kitiashvili, 'Orera', 'Shin', 'Egari', Machaidze, Dzodzuashvili).

Among the above-mentioned trends style crossing (fusion, cross-over, hybridization) tendencies are particularly noteworthy.

It is worth mentioning that with the exception of the last point on the list, pieces from each of these branches have the potential to become popular and gain 'folk' features. In this respect, and without regarding ethnic component, today's array of popular music encompasses the following directions:

- Authentic folk music (genres – Nana, feast - mostly urban, amusing);
- Reproduction of authentic folklore – stage folk music;
- Stage folk music in traditional style;
- Urban songs (Tsisperi trio, Simi, Porchkhidze, etc);
- 'Panogh' music (baiatis, duduki);
- Oriental-style post-folklore (Chkheidze, Kikabidze);
- Post-folklore (Georgian and foreign pop-songs, 'Chanson');
- Georgian songwriter's folk song (old layer – Kevkhashvili, Arjevnishvili, Zakaidze, Psuturi, Erkomashvili, Khatelishvili, and new layer – Kumsiashvili, Kenchiashvili, the Gogochuri sisters, the Zviadauris, the Naqeuris, Doiauri, etc);
- Georgian ethno-music (modern composed music, with the mix of fusion, jazz, rock and electronic music, etc).

To summarize, we would like to emphasize the following:

- The Soviet period created a new direction in Georgian folk music, which enriched its ethnic culture with artistic tendencies and interesting innovations;
- The pieces inspired by folk motifs, written by choirmasters and individual self-taught composers, popular among wide audiences, can be considered folk songs;

- The main stylistic feature of folk songs is distinctive individuality, with the emphasis on melodic development and harmonious innovations of the chromatic panduri;
- Georgian folk-musical society unjustly ignores songwriter's folk songs, which partly reduces the motivation to create of new folk pieces.

Finally, it should be said that Georgian songwriter's folk song is a worthy and artistically interesting part of Georgian culture, which needs more attention from both cultural officials and ethnomusicologists alike.

REFERENCES

Anikin, Vladimir. Prokoryevich. (1997). "Непостфольклор, а фольклор (к постановке вопроса о его современны хтрадициях)" (Not 'post-folklore' but 'folklore' (to the question of its contemporary traditions) [Proceedings of the scientific-practice conference: Slavic traditional culture and the modern world]. Dobrovolskaya, Varvara Evgenyevna (Ed.), (pp. 224-240). Moscow: State Republican Center for Russian Folklore.

Chkhikvadze, Grigol. (1961). "თანამედროვე ქართული მუსიკალური ფოლკლორი." (Georgian Contemporary Musical Folklore). Tbilisi: Society for the dissemination of political and scientific knowledge of the Georgian SSR.

Chkhikvadze, Grigol. (1981-1982). "კრიმანჭული ქართულ ხალხურ სიმღერებში და მისი ნაირსახეობანი." (Krimanchuli in Georgian Folk Songs and Its Diversities). Tbilisi: Manuscript of Tbilisi State Conservatoire.

Gabisonia, Tamaz. (2014). "Критерии „аутентичности“ в грузинском народном музыкальном исполнительстве" (Criteria of 'Authenticity' in Traditional Georgian Musical Performance). Belgrade: Musicology, a peer-reviewed journal of the Institute of Musicology of Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

Gabisonia, Tamaz. (2015). ავტორი ქართულ ეთნიკურ მუსიკაში. (The Author in Georgian Ethnic Music), The Issues of Performance Folk and Church Music. [Giorgi

Garaqanidze X International Festival of Folk and Church Music in Batumi]. Managadze, Khatuna (ed.), (pp. 145-163). Batumi: Music Faculty of Batumi Art State University.

Garaqanidze, Edisher. (2007). რჩეული წერილები. (Featured Letters). Manana Akhmeteli (Ed.). Tbilisi: Georgian Music Society.

Piotrowska, Anna. (2010) "World Music and Traditional Music. The Problem of Authenticity", [The Fourth International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony, Proceedings], Tsurtsunia, Rusudan, and Jordania, Joseph. (Eds.), (pp. 581-589). Tbilisi: International Research Center for Traditional Polyphony of Tbilisi State,

Tsurtsunia, Rusudan. (2010). "Georgian Polyphony in a Modern Socio-Cultural Context". (The Fourth international Symposium on Traditional Polyphony). Turtsumia, Rusudan and Jordania, Joseph (eds.), (pp. 622-636). Tbilisi: International Research Center for Traditional Polyphony of Tbilisi State Conservatoire.

Zemtsovsky, Izali. (1977). "Народная музыка и современность (К проблеме определения фольклора)" (Folk music and modernity (On the problem of determining folklore)), Modernity and folklore: articles and materials. in Gusev, Victor and Gorkovenko, Aleksandr (comp.), (pp. 28-75). Moscow: Music.