

Eno KOÇO

SCANDERBEG IN MUSIC¹

Scanderbeg as seen by historians and other writers

The History of the Life and Deeds of Scanderbeg, Prince of the Epirotes (Historia De Vita Et Gestis Scanderbegi Epirotarvm Principis) by Marin Barleti (*Marinus Barletius Scodrensis*), was published in Rome in 1508. This basic work was translated from Latin into a number of European languages. Barleti's work inspired many other authors, some of whom produced other remarkable creations, including musical ones.



MARINI BARLETII SCODRENSIS DE VITA ET REBUS GESTIS SCANDERBEGI
PRÆCLARISSIMI EPIROTARVM PRINCIPIS AD DONFERANDVM CASTRIOTVM
EIVS NEPOTEM LIBER PRIMUS

¹ This presentation is part of the discourse segment.

For any literary work of that time (poem, drama, tragedy and opera), the role of the hero modelled after Scanderbeg — featuring strong moral principles, bravery and audacity — acquired a particular significance not because of Europe's sensitivity to the *Ottomans'* potential westward expansion, but because the power of *communicating the drama especially through music* was a formidable form of expression. And Scanderbeg was represented in most diverse ways, with his strength and flair, great courage and dilemmas, often styled after heroes of classical antiquity.

Voltaire devoted a short chapter to Scanderbeg in his 'Essai sur les Moeurs des Nations' (Essay on the Manners of the Nations), highlighting two important factors, which helped Scanderbeg in his campaigns: the Albanians themselves as a race of fighters and the mountainous character of the country. ... Voltaire went on to conclude: 'Si les empereurs grec avaient été des Scanderbegs, l'empire d'orient se serait conservé (Had the Greek emperors been Scanderbegs, the Eastern Empire would have been preserved).'²

Ludvig Holberg, a Danish writer and philosopher, was of the same opinion 'proclaiming Scanderbeg as one of the greatest generals in history'. Sir William Temple wrote: '*George Castriot*, commonly called *Scanderbeg*, Prince of *Epire*, and Huniades, Viceroy of *Hungaria*, were two most victorious Captains, and excellent Men, the true Champions of Christendom, whilst they lived, and Terror of the *Turks*, who with small Forces held at a Bay for so many Years, all the Powers of the *Ottoman Empire*' (Temple 1731, 228).

Edward Gibbon, an 18th century English historian, as he sets forth his own theses and hypothesis, states that the 'Albanian prince may justly be praised as a firm and able champion of national independence. The enthusiasm of chivalry and religion has ranked him with the names of Alexander and Pyrrhus ... but his narrow dominion, and slender powers, must leave him at a humble distance below the heroes of antiquity, who triumphed over the East and the Roman legions'. Gibbon *would further* state that 'Scanderbeg might indeed be supported by the rational, though fallacious, hope, that the pope, the king of Naples, and the Venetian Republic, would join in the defence of a free

² Fan S. Noli, *George Castrioti—Scanderbeg (1405–1468)*, PhD Dissertation, Boston University, 1945, p. 196).

and Christian people, who guarded the sea-coast of the Adriatic, and the narrow passage from Greece to Italy' (Gibbon 1776–1789: Chapter 67).

The English poet Edmund Spencer in his first of three sonnets prefixed to 'The Historie of George Castriot, surnamed Scanderbeg, King of Albanie (*Upon the History of George Castriot, alias Scanderbeg, King of the Epirots*)' was inspired by Scanderbeg's qualities as leader:

Lo! one, whom later age hath brought to light,
Matchable to the greatest of those great:
Great both by name, and great in power and might,
And meriting a meere triumphant seate.
The scourge of Turkes, and plague of infidels,
Thy acts, O Scanderbeg, this volume tels.

The 16th century French poet Pierre de Ronsard (1524–85) describes the invincible fighter that Scanderbeg was:

Scanderbeg, haineux du peuple Scythien,
Qui de toute l'Asie a chassé l'Evangile.
O très-grand Epirote! Ô vaillant Albanois!
Dont la main a défait les Turcs vingt et deux fois.

Scanderbeg, hating the Scythian people,
Who from all Asia has expelled the Gospel.
O! Mighty Epirote! O! valiant Albanian!
Whose hand defeated the Turks twenty-two times.

Lord Byron, in his *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto the Second, XXXVIII, writes: 'Land of Albania! where Iskander [Scanderbeg] rose'.

Apart from the numerous books by foreign authors on Scanderbeg, the Albanian early leading authors, starting from Demetrio Franco (Dhimitër Frangu), manuscript of 1480, Marin Barleti (published in Venice on 1508–10), Giovanni Musachi di Berat (Ghin/Gjon Muzaka) with his memoirs *Breve memoria de li discendenti de nostra casa*

Musachi (Brief Chronicle on the Descendants of our Musachi Dynasty) in 1510, which contains substantial text about Scanderbeg. Frang Bardhi (Latin: *Franciscus Blancus*, Italian: *Francesco Bianchi*, 1606–1643), who wrote a biography of Scanderbeg, called *The Apology of Scanderbeg*, published in Venice in 1636). Other 19th, 20th and 21st century authors such as Jeronim De Rada (Girolamo de Rada, 1814–1903), an Arbëresh writer, published a poem in Albanian *Scanderbeccu i pa-faan* (The Unfortunate Scanderbeg) in the period 1872–1884, Naim Frashëri (1846–1900), Albanian poet and writer, wrote *Histori e Skënderbeut* (History of Scanderbeg) published in 1898, Fan Noli (1882–1965), *George Castrioti–Scanderbeg (1405–1468)*, PhD, 1945.

Further studies on Scanderbeg have been carried out by a number of eminent 20th century Albanian scholars.³ They created a *Scanderbegian* collection, a body of research that would further Albania's national vision.

The progress of the Albanian historical science is based on the analysis of sources of historical persistence and evolution. But, when the structure of analytical research has been based on historical retrospective, as it is based on historical data, a different, tendentious and prejudicial approach, has emerged from time to time, that of deconstruction, *demythification* of Scanderbeg in the name of a new historical methodology and criticism. In his 'Haunting History: Deconstruction and the Spirit of Revision', Ethan Kleinberg writes: 'Very few historians actively use deconstruction as a historical methodology ... The deconstructive strategy is to approach a text (historical or otherwise) as a site of contestation and struggle. ... History must build something while deconstruction is ceaselessly unbuilding'.

Oliver Jens Schmitt, in an interview with Ben Andoni after publishing his book on 'Scanderbeg', presents *arguments* in favour of his vision of deconstruction. He states: 'I believe that the debate [on Scanderbeg] had to do more with political dynamics, party interests and personal interests than with a genuine scientific debate about content and scientific interpretations'. He goes further to say that 'this is also a

³ Aleks Buda (1910–1993), Kristo Frashëri (1920–2016) with his *Skënderbeu*, Pëllumb Xhufi (1951–), Aurel Plasari (1956–) with his 'Scanderbeg, a political history' and Virgjil Kule (1952–), with his *Scanderbeg, the Last Crusader*'.

legacy of the totalitarian past and partly a direct consequence of the involvement of historians in political life'. Thus, the deconstruction takes another turn, that of fortifying *political* advantage. Schmitt's depoliticization has arguably failed to offer any definitional clarity, since by seeking to avoid depoliticization, he gets more deeply embroiled in these situations, suggesting that most of the Scanderbeg studies only became dominant over the years of totalitarian regime!

Scanderbeg in Music

At the beginning of the 18th century, there was a growing interest in representing Scanderbeg on the operatic stage. Some well-known *composers of baroque music* began to place a greater emphasis on music's dramatic power *to elicit emotional response. The sense of drama was also incorporated into the vocal forms such as opera.* In the list of rarely performed compositions, separate and specific arias and overtures have been recorded more often, including Antonio Vivaldi's opera *Scanderbeg* and Rebel and Francoeur's opera also titled *Scanderbeg*. More about these two operas below.

In the second half of the 18th century, musical compositions incorporating Levantine subjects would draw the attention of Western composers including Mozart with his opera *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (1772) where Belmonte attempted to *rescue his* beloved *Constanze* from the Selim Pasha's seraglio; or in his other opera, *Così fan tutte* (1790), where two of the characters, Ferrando and Guglielmo, disguised as Albanians, dressed in traditional Eastern costumes and portrayed as exotic characters, continue the attempt to win over two sisters' hearts.

While Mozart composed these operas at the end of the 18th century, Vivaldi composed his *Scanderbeg* at the beginning of the same century. Vivaldi might be called as a precursor of musical exoticism, although the forms, styles and conventions remained those of classical baroque (*barocco*). His characters were created not only compatible with Western tastes, but also the Western perception of the Levant. Evoking the Orient (mostly its eroticism) through the choreographic and orchestral interludes was particularly attractive for the composers and audiences.

In later decades, throughout the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, writers, painters and composers driven by symbolism saw music, as well as other arts, as a magic field where mystical meditation and sensual pleasure were intermingled. Looking through a symbolist's lens, the Levant served as the site where sensations, including the dangerous, the wonderful and the unpredictable intermingled. Composers who reached the 20th century like Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel and Karol Szymanowski, perceived the Orient as an imaginative space where one could take refuge from the sordid sounds of the urban West.

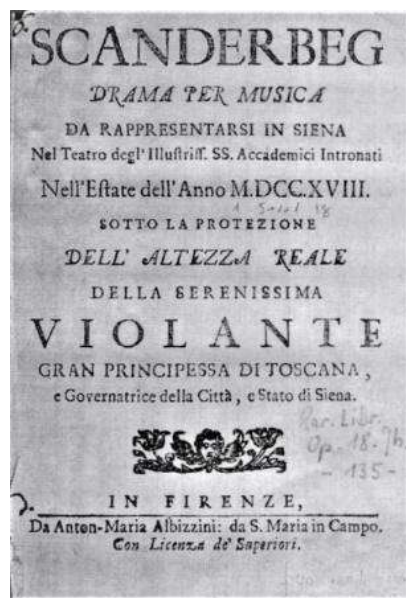
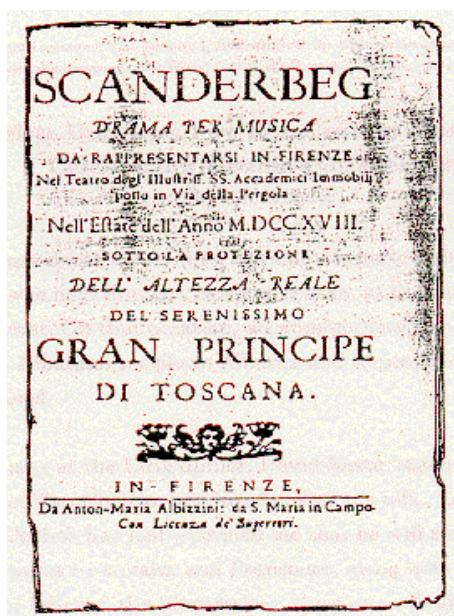
The fact that Scanderbeg led his people against the Ottomans in defence of his country and the region as well as his conversion to Catholicism, was welcomed by 'Christian Europe', which considered him a key natural and necessary ally. This was reflected in the literary and artistic works that were written about the leader. Operatic *libretti* and music focused on subjects that could bring beauty to the eyes of the world, which is indispensable to the realisation of a musical composition.

Edward Gibbon in his Chapter XV of *The Decline and Fall of The Roman Empire in the East*, appears to be one of the progenitors of the 'Christian Dark Ages' myth that Christianity somehow suppressed scientific progress and stifled learning. His theory has not yet been proven. Neil Moran in his 'Byzantine castrati' mentions that 'Edward Gibbon's negative picture of the "decadent" Byzantines can be attributed in large measure to his abhorrence of the physical mutilation that made them what they were' (Moran 2002, 99). The present article, 'Scanderbeg in Music', reinforces the fact that Scanderbeg's role in Vivaldi's opera was sung by a *castrato* singer, Giovanni Battista Carboni, of the Italian baroque period.

Antonio Vivaldi—*Scanderbeg*

Vivaldi's opera or musical drama *Scanderbeg* is based on a work of the acclaimed librettist Antonio Salvi (1664–1724), whose creations were then put to music by the greatest composers of the time, including Alessandro Scarlatti and Georg Friedrich Handel. Opera *had its première* at the *Teatro de la Pergola* in Florence on June 22nd 1718 and

echoed the fact that it was related to the reopening of this theatre, the oldest opera house in Italy.



Vivaldi, *Scanderbeg*, drama per musica, Firenze 1718, Siena 1718

More than 300 years ago, in 1718, it was in this theatre that Mozart's opera premieres would later be performed, and still later those of Donizetti, Verdi and Mascagni. Vivaldi wrote the opera *Scanderbeg*, which also coincided with the 250th anniversary of Scanderbeg's death. Could Vivaldi and Salvi have been aware of this anniversary, or was it pure coincidence?

Vivaldi's musical drama *Scanderbeg* was performed eighteen times until September 1718. With this opera the composer established more strongly his well-known status as the most celebrated composer of his time. Ralph P. Locke in his 'Music and the Exotic from the Renaissance to Mozart' summarises the plot of *Scanderbeg* as follows: 'Vivaldi's opera relates how, in the late fifteenth century, the Albanian patriot Skanderbeg—a renowned historical figure—united local chieftains to drive back the invading Ottoman army. Scanderbeg contains major singing roles for evil Ottomans, notably Sultan Amurat,

(i.e., Murad II, another figure from history)—portrayed as a “treacherous and lecherous tyrant who is doomed from the start”—and his general Acomat (i.e., Ahmed). In the final act, Amurat, in contravention of military tradition, attacks a Christian camp from the rear in the midst of peace negotiations.



Vivaldi, *Attori Greci, Attori Turchi; Scanderbeg – Re dell' Albania Mutazioni* (Scene Changes)

Scanderbeg's forces overwhelm the Ottomans, and Amurat, crazed by the memory of having killed Scanderbeg's three brothers, runs offstage to take his own life' (Locke 2015, 256, 257).

What has been inherited from this *late baroque* opera are six authentic music fragments left (four arias and two recitatives), which have been archived in the Italian city of Turin, while the complete libretto is stored in Bologna's library. Despite the existence of *only these fragments*, it is not so difficult to create an idea about the whole of Vivaldi's music with his characteristic, short, recurring motifs that he used as subjects, his typical use of rhythm and syncopation in order to increase the needed intensity, the *ritornello* (refrains) that he created

as a separate structure by repeating only the main motifs of musical phrases, as well as other features, were musical concepts for which he left significant traces in the history of world music.

Vivaldi's *Scanderbeg* was restored to a work with a contemporary spirit by Francesco Venerucci and was put on stage at Tirana's Opera House on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Albanian independence in 2012. But let's stick to the original baroque opera version composed 300 years ago. It is a traditional three-act structure and its actors (characters) are Albanian and Turkish. In the score they are marked *Attori Greci* (that is Christian Albanians)⁴ and *Attori Turchi*. Scanderbeg as a character is *Re dell' Albania* (King of Albania). At the premiere of 1718 Scanderbeg's role was sung by *Il Sig. [nor] Giovanni Battista - Carboni, contralto castrato*. The vocal register of this male voice 'from another world' is the same as that of a female *contralto* or *mezzo-soprano*. *Doneca, sua Sposa in abito di Pastorella* (his wife, disguised as a shepherdess), was sung by Francesca Cuzzoni-Sandoni (soprano); *Aroniz, Principe dell'Epiro, Padre di Doneca in abito di Pastore* (Prince of Epirus, Doneca/Donika's father, disguised as a shepherd) was sung by Antonio Ristorini (tenor); *Ormondo, Conte d'Urana* (Vrana Konti), *Generale dell'Armi* (Army General), was sung by Giovanni Pietro Sbaraglia (*contralto castrato*); *Climene, Capitano di Scanderbeg* (Scanderbeg's Captain), was sung by Anna Guglielmini (soprano). Among Turkish characters are: *Amurath, Monarca de' Traci* (Monarch of the Turks), sung by Gaetano Mossi (tenor); *Asteria, Principessa, sua Figlia* (his daughter, Princess), was sung by Agata Landi (contralto) and *Acomat, Generale d'Amurat, amante d'Asteria* (Amurath's General, Asteria's lover), was sung by Rosa Venturini (soprano).

Page six of the libretto, *Mutazioni* [di scene] (scene changes) ends with the words: 'The scene presents Kruja, capital of Albania, with its surroundings'. First Act of musical drama develops in three moments: Camp under the walls of Kruja with ruined suburbs; Neighbourhood of Asteria in Amurath's camp near these suburbs; Courtyard of Scanderbeg's palace. Second Act: Countryside with royal pavilion;

⁴ All the Byzantine subjects of the Ottoman Empire, Orthodox Greeks, Albanians, Bulgarians, Serbs and Vlachs, as well as Georgians and Arabs, were considered part of the same *millet* in spite of their differences in ethnicity and language.

Asteria's apartment in Scanderbeg's palace; Grove near the camp of Amurath. Third Act: Civilians in the city of Kruja; Countryside with a view of the city bulwark; Road outside the city of Kruja covered with scattered corpses.

Before listening to these two musical examples from Vivaldi's opera, Scanderbeg's recitative and aria from the Act II where Scanderbeg, Ormondo and soldiers are on stage, some explanation of the baroque style of Italian music needs to be provided. The recitative (one of the two original ones that has been preserved), '*Ormondo, ti scordasti*' (Ormondo, You Forgot) and the aria that follows '*Con palme ed allori*' (With Palms and Laurels), represent the typical baroque operatic style: the relationship between recitative and aria, the role of *basso continuo* (harpsichord with bass accompaniment), instrumental ornaments, vocal *gorgheggi*, and quite a few performance details.⁵ Scanderbeg's recitative which contains an imaginative dialogue between him (Scanderbeg) and Ormondo, conveys Scanderbeg's rebuke to Ormondo about his duel with Acomat. In order to personify Skanderbeg, Vivaldi includes a conversational or 'dry' recitative (*recitativo secco*), sung with a free rhythm dictated by the accents of the words and with a series of short phrases and recurring pulse. Meanwhile, portraying Ormondo, the slightly melodic recitative conveys a sense of melancholia and feeling of sadness. As regards the

⁵ Recitative: [Scanderbeg] – *Ormondo ti scordasti / Che sei mio Duce e mio vassallo?* (Ormondo you forgot that you are my leader and my vassal?). *Il brando / Che cingi a' fianchi tuoi / Tutto a me l'obligasti, e tutto è mio, / Né cingerlo tu puoi / Fuori che pe'l tuo Prence, e pe'l tuo Dio.*

[Ormondo] – *È vero, ma...*

[Scanderbeg] – *... or vedi in qual impegno / Col pubblico interesse / Posa mia gloria un tuo privato sdegno.* [Ormondo] – *Signore, ecco al tuo piè...*

[Scanderbeg] – *... sorgi d'oblio / Spargo le colpe tue per l'avvenire / Meglio l'ardir, meglio la man s'adopre.*

[Ormondo] – *Farò che 'l brando mio*

[Scanderbeg] – *Non più taccia la lingua e parlin l'opre. / Torna in Troia...*

[Ormondo] – *... e tu resti?*

[Scanderbeg] – *Io coperto da questi / Selvaggi orrori alle nemiche tende / M'avanzèrò per misurar d'appresso / Le tracie forze, e regolar me stesso.*

Aria: [Scanderbeg] *Con palme ed allori / M'invita la Gloria, / Con serti di fiori / M'alletta l'Amor. Amante e guerriero / Con doppia vittoria / Di render io spero / La pace al mio cor.*

instrumental accompaniment, it is of a *basso continuo* style⁶ (cello and harpsichord), simple and chordal.



Vivaldi, *Scanderbeg*: Scanderbeg's recitative '*Ormondo, ti scordasti*' (Ormondo, You Forgot) and aria '*Con palme ed allori*' (With Palms and Laurels); act II, scene IX.

After Scanderbeg's recitative, his aria is characterised by the vocal and instrumental agility on both singer and trumpet parts and the music is adorned by expressive vocal passages sung to one syllable (*melisma*); then the two trumpets and two oboes in a *concertato* style provide a versatile palette of articulations to shape the notes and trills. The long flowing melodic lines using ornamentation (decorative notes), **contrapuntal** texture where the vocal and trumpet parts are combined, **terraced dynamics** (sudden changes in the volume level), all of these elements display a narrative where the burst of imagination and feeling of freedom blend so artfully.

During Vivaldi's time the baroque vocal tone colour of (*contr*)*alto castrato* was a type of classical male singing voice timbre that no longer exists, but in *Scanderbeg's* premiere it was sung by Giovanni Battista Carboni, who was a *castrato* singer from Mantua, musically educated at the Gonzaga court and for that period was in the service of the Duke Chapel.⁷ Castrati were also classified as a 'third gender'.⁸ Scanderbeg's part in the upper register of a male voice 'from another world' was not uncommon for the heroic roles of Italian opera and beyond. For example, at the premiere of Handel's opera 'Julius Caesar in Egypt', the main role, Caesar, was sung by a *castrato* called Senesino. Gluck, known as the composer of Italian and French operas of the early classical period, did not prefer a female voice for the

⁶ After this recitative, the aria continues in ABA form – where A is '*Con palme ed allori / M'invita la Gloria, / Con serti di fiori / M'alletta l'Amor*', to contrast in the middle part (B) with '*Amante e guerriero / Con doppia vittoria / Di render io spero / La pace al mio cor*', and to return to *Da Capo* with the A material '*Con palme ed allori*'.

⁷ Carboni's intense activity as a virtuoso singer included Mantua, Florence, Rome, Venice and elsewhere.

⁸ See Marianne Trâvén, 'Voicing the Third Gender – The Castrato Voice and the Stigma of Emasculation in Eighteenth-century Society' (*La voix du troisième sexe: la voix de castrat et la honte de l'émasculat dans la société du XVIIIe siècle*), in *Revue de littérature et de civilisation* (XVI^e – XVIII^e siècles), 2016.

leading role. In the first variant of Gluck's opera 'Orpheus', composed in Vienna in 1762, the main role (Guadagno) was entrusted to the voice of an alto *castrato*. Present day conductors wanting to preserve the original vocal register, would give such a role to a male artist who sings in *falsestto* or to a counter-tenor and would be less inclined to choose a female voice, alto or mezzo-soprano, as in the case of the audio example ('Ormondo, ti scordasti').

Another audio example from the same opera is Ormondo's aria 'S'a voi penso, o luci belle' (I think of you, o beautiful lights). This aria, in this modern version, is sung by a female *contralto* and not by a *contralto castrato* (a male voice), as it was sung 300 years ago by Giovanni Pietro Sbaraglia. Unlike Scanderbeg's recitative and aria, which is full of vibrancy and dynamism, Ormondo's aria, whose recitative has not been preserved, conveys the mood and sensitivity of the character's role, due to its *reflective* and *melancholic* melody.



Vivaldi, *Scanderbeg*, Ormondo's aria — 'S'a voi penso, o luci belle'
(I think of you, o beautiful lights)

François Rebel and François Francœur – *Scanderbeg*, An Operatic Lyrical Tragedy

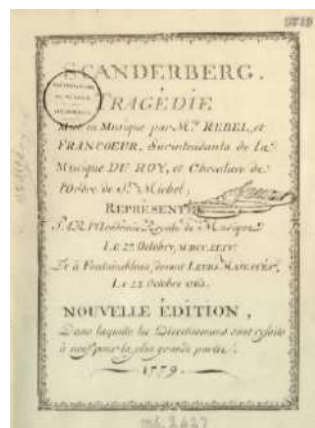
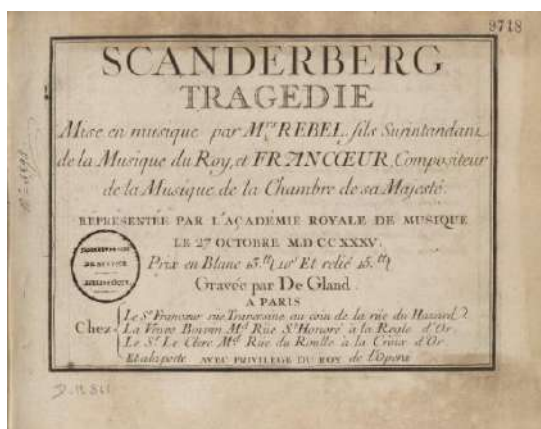
François Rebel (1701–1775) and François Francoeur (1698–1787) were two French composers of the Baroque period, who jointly wrote a lyrical tragedy entitled *Scanderbeg*. The work was first performed at the Académie Royale de Musique (the Paris *Opera*) on the 27th of October, 1735. It takes the form of a *tragédie en musique* consisting of a prologue and five acts. *The libretto was written by Antoine Houdar de Lamotte and Jean-Louise-Ignace de La Serre.*⁹

Work resumed at Château de Fontainebleau, the Oval Courtyard (*Cour Ovale*), on October 22nd and 29th, 1763. On this occasion, Bachaumont notes: 'We talk a lot about opera *Scanderbeg*, performed at Fontainebleau on the 22nd of this month with the greatest magnificence. The decoration of the mosque surpasses anything you

⁹ (In French) *Scanderbeg*—Tragédie; Prologue: Melpomene, Polymnie, La Magie, L'Amour; 1re acte: Scanderbeg, Osman, Roxane; 2d acte: Scanderbeg, Servilie, Amurat; 3me acte: Roxane, Scanderbeg, Le Visir, Amurat; 4me acte: Servilie, Scanderbeg, Roxane, Amurat; 5me acte: Le Caimacan, Amurat, Le Muphti, Servilie.

can say: the columns are garnished with diamonds and have a most surprising effect. It is claimed that this is a small imitation of that of St. Sophie’.

An appreciative review of the opera was written by the 18th century journalist, drama critic and French theatre historian, Antoine de Lérís. Another detailed review was published in 1757 in *L'Esprit De L'Abbé Des Fontaines* (The Spirit of the Abbot of the Fountains); Guyot 2010: 293–95).¹⁰



¹⁰ 'This piece is brimming with delicate features, brilliant maxims, and fine thoughts. The music is by Mr. Rebel and Mr. Francoeur, both known for their previous successes and especially their charming opera *Pyrame et Tysbé* (Thisbé). Their songs are soft and natural. Their expression is fair, noble and emotive. Their recitative is in the style of Lully and M. Destouches, without being in any place an imprint of these great Masters. Divertissements are well characterised. The instruments speak with as much force as clarity and always seem to say what is meant to be conveyed, because the symphonies are specific to each part of the Ballet. All tunes are melodious, easy to remember, nervous but not weird, light but not baseness, natural but not trivial. Those looking for feeling and genius, [here can] find some; hard workers, Scientists in Music, if they are not warned, do justice to a number of places, where there are deep combinations. Science is above all in the accompaniments and in the choirs. Finally, everything is destined; they are not beauties of chance and caprice, it's enthusiasm and reflection nothing grins there, everything is correct and sensible. It's not hard work, *secco*, moved, it's a delicate art that hides, that looks like nature, is who embellishes it. This alliance of genius, research and taste, is the mystery of theatrical music.

With regard to the Poem, ingenious as it is, one cannot hide that there are great faults. A Poem of this kind is always good when it interests, when it contains vivid and touching scenes, brilliant parties, delicate thoughts, and fine ariettas, in one word, when it is like this'.



L'Esprit De L'Abbé Des Fontaines, vol. IV, 1757, pp. 293–95

The opera score and its libretto are well-preserved to the present day and in the *same condition* as that in which they were first created less than 300 years ago.¹¹ The characters of the Prologue are: Melpomene, *Muse de la Tragédie*; Polimnie, *Muse de la Musique*; L'Amour, La Magie. The characters of the tragedy are (in French): Amurat—Empereur des Turcs; Roxane—Sultan's favorite; Scanderberg [sic]—Roi d'Albanie; Servilie, Princesse—fille du Despote de Servie; Osman—Bostangi Bachi; Le Muphti; L'Aga des Janissaires; Rustan—Officier de l'Empereur, Une Grecque, Une Asiatique, Sultanes, Bostangis, Grecs et Grecques de la Suite de Servilie, Le Vizir, Janissaires, Le Muphti, Les Imans, Officiers du sérail, Esclaves de différentes nations de l'un et de l'autre sexe, Les différents peuples de la Turquie, Les grands officiers de la Porte, Serviens et Serviennes—de la suite de Servilie, Albanais et Albanaises—de la suite de Scanderberg.¹²

The libretto tells us that the event occurs in Adrianople (Edirne), and that at the epicentre is the 'Albanian hero Scander-Beg, who resisted the Turks of Murat II and Muhammad II, and died in 1467'. The plot is an imaginative creation.

¹¹ <http://baroquelibretto.free.fr/scanderberg.htm>

¹² For the opera's première, their roles were (in French): Mlle Eremans (Melpomène), Mlle Monville (Polymnie), Mlle Bourbonnois (L'Amour) et Jélyotte (La Magie) pour le prologue, Chassé (Amuralh, grand empereur des Turcs), Mlle Antier (Roxane, sa Sultane favorite), Tribou (Scanderbeg, prince d'Albanie), Mlle Péliissier (Servilie, princesse de Servie), Dun (Osman), Jélyotte (Le Muphti, l'Aga des Janissaires), Mlle Eremans (Une Sultane, une Asiatique, une Odalisque), Mlle Bourbonnois (Une Grecque, une Italienne), Cuvillier et Cuignier (Deux Scythes).

The musical style of the French baroque with its instruments and aesthetics gave rise to a wealth of new sound ideas. This elaborate style embodied these noble ideas, such as preference for euphemism, neat details, love for theatre, colour and radiance. Contrast (loud and soft, solo and ensemble), **monody and the advent of the *basso continuo*, different instrumental sounds, timbre and performance techniques**, were important features in the baroque composition. Unlike Vivaldi's *Scanderbeg*, or rather the style of Italian baroque music which used only *secco* recitatives, the style of the French baroque opera includes melodic recitatives, chorus and dancing.

In the Prologue of Rebel & Fracœur's *Scanderbeg*, the theatre represents a grove dedicated to the muses. Mount Parnassus, the home of the muses, is visible in the distance. Parnassus also became known as the home of poetry, music, and learning. Each muse had an assigned artistic domain and one muse in particular, Melpomene, the muse of tragedy, addresses to L'Amour with the words: *Retraçons les premiers ans / De se Héros célèbre dans l'Histoire / Qui fut depuis la terreur des Sultans*' (Let's retrace the first years/ From this famous Hero in History / Who was since the terror of the Sultans).

The Prologue begins with an overture characterised by the *bravura style* of the French Baroque period. Scanderbeg's first appearance on stage is at the very start of the First Act.



Rebel & Francœur, *Scanderbeg*, Overture

Dialogues between the characters, recitatives and ariosos follow in turn to conclude with the chorale at the end of the Act 1, *Choeur des bostangis et des sultanes* (Choir of imperial guards and rulers, p. 107). In Act II [p. 108 (58)], the choir conveys feelings of *adoration* of the Sultan Amurath by singing: '*Heureux Vainqueur / Jouis de la Victoire / Un cœur tendre assure ton bonheur*' (Happy Winner / Enjoy Victory / A tender heart ensures your happiness). Act 3 starts with Roxane's '*Tout est prêt*' (Everything is ready); the music criticism of the time characterised her as 'volcanic Roxane, whose considerate voluptuousness overflows on the unfortunate Scanderberg'. Through a *quasi*-martial character of music, she gives a strong message to Amurath although she is known as his favourite person. Here are the

first two verses of Roxane's aria: '*Tout est prêt / le Vizir seconde mon envie / Tremble Amurat / La mort va punir ton forfait*' (Everything is ready / Vizir backs my desire / Tremble Amurath / Death will punish your crime). In the last verses of the same aria, Roxane addresses L'Amour: '*Fureur, Amour / Secondez mon impatience / Fureur, Amour / Régniez dans mon coeur tour à tour / Frappé d'intelligence*' (Fury Amour / Support my impatience / Fury Amour / Reign in my heart in turn / Struck with intelligence).



Rebel & Francoeur, *Scanderbeg*, Roxane, 'Tout est prêt' (Everything is Ready), Act 3



Shortly thereafter, Scanderbeg, who also often referred to L'Amour, declares: '*Qu'importe que j'écoute ou L'Amour ou la Gloire? / C'est assez de savoir que je les sers tous les deux*' (What does it matter if I listen to L'Amour or Gloire? / It's enough to know I serve them both). Meanwhile, at the end of this act, *l'Aga des Janissaires* (The Janissaries' Aga)¹³, praises Skanderbeg's figure by saying: '*Le Sultan dans tes mains a remis son tonnerre / Sous ses lois, fais[t] trembler la*

¹³ Agha, also Aga, is an honorific title for a civilian or military officer in the [Ottoman Empire](#).

terre / Vole à tes brillants exploits / Que ta valeur enchaîne la victoire / En suivant ton exemple, en écoutant ta voix / Nous aurions part à la gloire (The Sultan in your hands has delivered his thunder / Under his laws, shake the earth / Fly to your brilliant exploits / May your value chain victory / By following your example, by listening to your voice / We would share in the glory).



In Acts 4 and 5, two female characters are portrayed as being involved with Scanderbeg: on the one hand is Servilie, gracious but determined and on the other, Roxane, captivating and passionate. Act 5 is set at the entrance of the Great Mosque, where Amurath, Muftis and Imams have gathered. Servilie, Scanderbeg as well as Albanian men and women from Scanderbeg's entourage are also attending.

The last words of Scanderbeg before the opening of the final chorus are: '*Si le sort / Vous outrage / Aimez davantage; Le courage / Conduit au port*' (If the fate / You outrage / Love more / Courage / Drives [you] to port).

* * *

(Bernard Germain Etienne Medard de la Ville-sur-Ilлон Comte, de) Lacépède (1756–1825), was a French naturalist, politician, musician and an active freemason. As a politician he managed to become

president of the French Senate and *Chancelier de la Legion d'honneur*, while as a composer Lacépède created five operas, one of which was titled 'Scanderbeg'. This opera was commissioned in 1785 by the committee of *Academie Royale de Musique*. Although it was written as a score, the opera was never performed since it was Lacépède himself who decided not to bring it to light. It is worth stating that all of Lacépède's music, including his *Scanderbeg* opera, has been lost.

Vladimir Georg(evich) Kastrioto-Skanderbek

Looking East, in Imperial Russia of the 19th century, a musician with a special name— Vladimir Georg(evich) Kastrioto-Skanderbek (1820–1879), made his mark in music composition in this country.

Vladimir Georg(evich) Kastrioto-Skanderbek (1820–1879) Владимир Георг(иевич) Кастриото-Скандербек
'Kastrioto-Skanderbek, prince (князь), Russian composer, descendant of Albania's national hero, Skander-Bey-Kastriot (1403[!]-1468)
<i>Музыкальная энциклопедия, Советская энциклопедия, Под ред. Ю. В. Келдыша. 1973–1982</i>
Place of birth: Saint-Petersburg, Russian Empire (1820—13 [25] February 1879)
Owned properties in Mogilev province and Saint-Petersburg
Composed works of chamber music and 24 published romances. His string quartet received the second prize in the Russian music competition in 1861.
A close friend of Dargomyzhsky whose letters to Kastriot were published in 'The Artist' in 1894. https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/

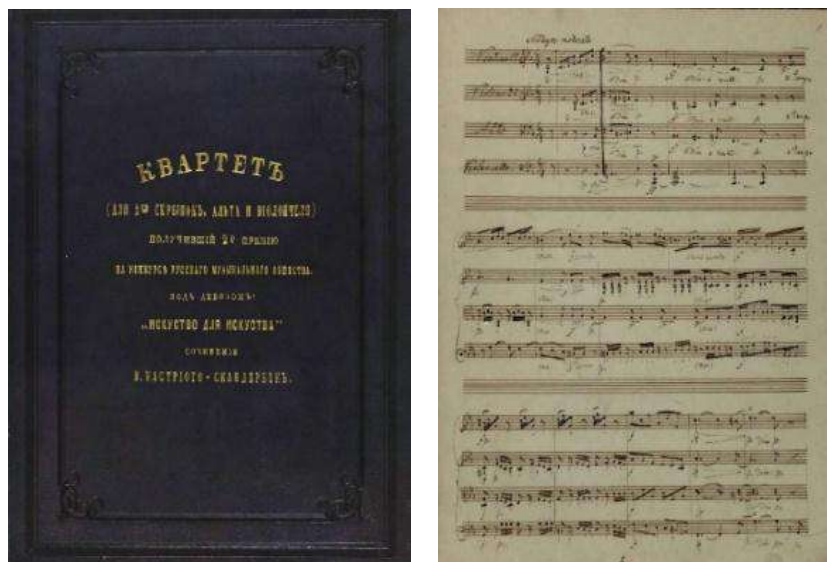
Kastrioto-Skanderbek, a descendant of the Kastrioti family, continued to hold his title of nobility, prince, even in Imperial Russia, owning property in Mogilev province [Могилёвская губерния], in the western part of the Russian Empire. In Russian *music encyclopaedias* his name is still related to the key word 'Albania'. They also note: 'Kastrioto-Skanderbek, prince, Russian composer, is a descendant of Albania's national hero, Gjergj Kastriot Skanderbeg (1403–1468)'. Kastrioto-Skanderbek married a banker's daughter, Ekaterina (singer), while his son, Georg Vladimirovich Kastrioto-Skanderbek-Drekalovich, lawyer and senator, was still known in Mogilev province and beyond as heir to the Kastriots, and in May 1913, at Neuwied castle

in Germany, *he was declared* the rightful heir to the Albanian throne. When we speak of Kastrioto-Skanderbek of St. Petersburg, we naturally associate him with the 15th century Albanian national warrior hero, Scanderbeg. However, as is the case with this research paper, our Skanderbek is a composer. *In his early twenties*, in addition to his military career, Kastrioto-Skanderbek was overwhelmed by a *burning desire* to express his creative energy as a musician. *He followed his dream* and captured it. *Becoming a composer* Kastrioto-Skanderbek produced a series of works, among them the complete symphonies of Beethoven in the *piano quintet transcriptions*, his overtures and ‘Hammerklavier’ piano sonata. Kastrioto-Skanderbek’s own compositions, including his cantata and 24 vocal romances based on the poetry of Pushkin, Lermontov, Lamartine and Baratynsky, were among his published works. His three string quartets, in particular, acquired a distinctive reputation, one of which won the second prize at the Russian Music Society Competition in 1861.

In his real estate in Mogilev, Kastrioto-Skanderbek periodically hired either a string quartet or an orchestral ensemble. In the capital he also established his own music salon. But what is probably most remembered, is his special relationship with the most prominent Russian composers of the 19th century and in particular his correspondence with his close friend, *Alexandr Sergeyevich Dargomyzhsky* (Russian: Алекса́ндр Серге́евич Даргомы́жский) between 1848–1857. In St. Petersburg, Kastrioto became good friends with Glinka, the founding father of the Russian school of classical music. In his letters Glinka regarded Skanderbek as ‘his good friend and good musician’¹⁴ (B. Bogdanov Berezovsky 1952–53: 279).

In April 1845, Dargomyzhsky travelled to Vienna, where Kastrioto-Skanderbek lived and worked as a member of the Concordia Art Society. He introduced *Dargomyzhsky* to several musicians, writers and other representatives of the Viennese artistic world.

¹⁴ Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka (Russian: Михаи́л Ива́нович Гли́нка) is, among others, the author of the opera Ivan Susanin (*A Life for the Tsar*) that was also staged in Albania in 1954.



V. G. Kastrioto-Skanderbek, *String Quartet*, Second Prize at the Russian Music Society Competition, 1861

These acquaintances gave Dargomyzhsky recognition and fame beyond Russia's borders. Dargomyzhsky is also known in Albania due to the fact that the Opera and Ballet Theatre in Tirana *opened its doors* to the public for the *first time* with his opera 'Rusalka', on November 28th, 1953.

Although we have not yet been able to get hold of the works of Kastrioto-Skanderbek, we hope to find at least his romance on Scanderbeg. For more information I will refer to Dargomyzhsky himself with some excerpts from his letters sent to Kastrioto-Skanderbek that I have recently translated from Russian. *These letters were* extracted from a popular *Russian historical* journal 'Russkaya Starina' (Русская старина) of St. Petersburg for the period from 1870 to 1918.



Russkaya Starina, historical monthly edition, Saint Petersburg, 1895

Here are some short fragments of Dargomyzhsky's letters:

‘I sent out your quartet to Henselt. Sorry for my immodesty—I read it to him. I already see in it the skills of an experienced master: Congratulations. ... If you wish to know my general opinion on the quartet—here it is: *Andante*—excellent; *Scherzo*—imbued with agreeable effects; the first *Allegro*, although interesting, not quite diversely. In the last *Finale*, the foundation is a bit lacking in terms of variety, little elaborate, but in performance the effect should come out pretty brilliantly’ (St. Petersburg, 12 December, 1856).

‘Thank you from the bottom of my heart for the memory of me and the flattering dedication of your six new romances. I played and pored over the material you sent to me with great pleasure and interest. ... New music gives me satisfaction, especially such romances, like yours, in which there are thoughts almost everywhere, feelings very often, the accuracy and purity finish are continuous. You are not always lucky in the choice of words; you forget that even the best poems are often good to read, but awkwardly lie to the music’ (12 December, 1856).

In these passages, as well as in many other letters in French and Russian, it is clearly observed that the communication between Kastrioti-Skanderbeg and Dargomyzhsky, derived from their creative and professional relationship, that is, from their *creativity* and intelligence. Regrettably, we can provide here only Dargomyzhsky's letters.

Harlampy Hristo Kochev

Another Albanian musician who lived, studied and developed his career in St. Petersburg in the second half of the 19th century was Harlampy Hristo Kochev. Born around 1869, he was originally from Boboshtitsa, near Korça (Albania). Between 1938 and 1954, three articles were written in Albania by the same author, the publicist Milto Sotir Gura.¹⁶ In these writings, but also in a book published later by Ramadan Sokoli's book *Sixteen Centuries*, the name this musician has been given in Albanian is Harallamb Kristo(for) Kochi. It is worth pointing out that in less than a hundred years not only has he been named inaccurately in Albanian, but also other details related to him data have been misrendered. For example, he's said to have been connected to an 'Imperial Choir' instead of 'A Cappella Choir', or to have composed an 'Albanian Anthem' instead of an 'Albanian March', and so on.

An Albanian scholar from Korça, Nedai Thëllimi, *had some* doubts regarding Kochev's surname. So, he conducted a literary and biographical investigative research, which led him to conclude that 'all the Albanian writers were mistaken when they recorded Harlampy's

accompanied by a small orchestra. But only a string quartet accompaniment, however interesting, may not be satisfactory enough for a dramatic music, which always requires more or less energy' (1 November 1850);

'My sister started to play the harp again (Ermine—a brilliant harpist); write for us a romance for tenor and harp and we'll sing it to your health. I recently forced Bilibina to sing your cavatina *Есть тихая роща* [There is a quiet grove]. I like it very much and I am convinced that if it is not so long and difficult as an accompaniment, it would be sung everywhere'. ... (St. Petersburg, 1 November 1850);

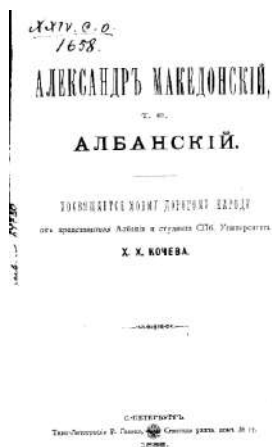
'I chose for you a redwood piano. It's a beautiful one, a so-called Concert Piano (Grand piano), soft, sounds delicious and caresses fingers.... (St. Petersburg, 19 February 1857).

¹⁶ In 'Albanian Struggle' (*Përpijekja Shqiptare*) journal, Tiranë, 1938 (Nr. 14–15, pp. 117–118), in 'Albanian World' (*Bota shqiptare*) book, Tiranë, 1943, (pp. 597–602) and in 'Bulletin for Social Sciences' (*Buletin për shkencat shoqërore*), Tiranë, 1954 (pp. 135–141).

surname as Koçi (Kochi). From the documents we have consulted, he is Koço/Kocho (Thëllimi 2002: 18). I believe Thëllimi's conclusion to be correct because the surname Kocho (Koço) is quite common and widespread in Boboshtitsa village. Harllampy's surname together with his patronymic, as published in magazines and periodicals in Russian, Czech, Polish and German, have only a Russian form of name and appear to be adapted only as Hristo/Kristo Kochev (Russians have three names; a first name, a *patronymic* (or middle name based on their father's first name) and a last name. Not without a reason. The village of Boboshtitsa, where Harllampy came from, was inhabited by Albanian citizens who at home spoke a special 'boboshtar' (old Slavic) dialect—the locals called it 'kaj nas', meaning 'from our region' (from this end, or, *on our side*). Viktor Eftimiu, a *Rumanian* poet and playwright, who was originally from Boboshtitsa, characterises this dialect as 'Slavic with the intonation of spoken Latin'.

The information on Harllampy Hristo Kochev (as he wanted to be called) was extracted from original documents in Russian, probably from the same collection that Gura had consulted, including the brochure 'Alexandr the Macedonian, that's Albanian', at the front page of which Kochev noted that he was a representative of Albania, while he was still a student at St. Petersburg University.

With regard to the significance of Kochev's contribution to the musical representation of Scanderbeg's figure, a few passages from St. Petersburg's periodicals from 1895 will provide valuable insight and serve as an informative reference. Three excerpts from the essay 'Alexandr the Macedonian, that's Albanian', appear to be among the most significant (St. Petersburg, 1895).



ALEXANDR MAKEDONSKY i.e. ALBANSKY

‘Albanians, Do Not Forget Our Side [Country]’, St. Petersburg, 1895;

In Albanian with Cyrillic letters below the image: ‘O, Shqipëtarë, mos aroni juve anën tonë

The first excerpt: ‘With the blessed participation of Prof. Weinberg, of St. Petersburg University, the libretto was provided of the Albanian opera ‘Skenderbeg’, the Albanian hero. The material of this opera is based on the history of peoples’ life and the impression that people generally tend to get from it. Members of the Music Department include Professor of Novorossiysk University, Fedorov, and other prominent composers, to whom I provide Albanian folk music motifs as well as my works. This opera represents the lives of the Albanian people and the exploits of unforgettable heroes; this opera will serve to strengthen the consciousness and national pride of the Albanians, their revival and awakening, as well as the familiarisation of Europeans with Albanian music, particularly because in Sevastopol, Odessa and Bessarabia there is a colony of Albanians’ (Кочев, ‘Александръ Македонскій т.е. Албанскій’, Kochev, 1895, pp. 32–33).

Благодаря благосклонному участию г. проф. СПб. Универс. Нейнберга, составляется либретто Албанской оперы «Скендер-бегъ», герой Албанскій, матеріалъ для этой оперы я даю изъ народной исторической жизни и изъ своихъ впечатлѣній. Въ музыкальномъ отдѣленіи участвуетъ проф. Новороссійск. универс. Оедоровъ и др. извѣстные композиторы, которымъ я даю музыку изъ народныхъ Албанскихъ мотивовъ и моихъ сочиненій. Эта опера будетъ представлять Албанскую историческую жизнь и подвиги незабвенныхъ героев; эта опера будетъ служить для сознанія Албанцами національной гордости и для побужденія ихъ къ возрожденію и для ознакомленія Европейцевъ съ Албанскою музыкою, тѣмъ болѣе, что въ Севастополѣ, Одессѣ и Бессарабія находятся колоніи Албанцевъ.

Въ газетахъ „Гражданинъ“ была напечатана критика на мои сочиненія подъ заглавіемъ: „Албанскіе мотивы и пѣсни Х. Х. Кочева“. Перечень моихъ пѣсенъ и мотивовъ слѣдующій: Ода Русскому Царю Александру II, подъ заглавіемъ „Плевна“, романъ „Судьба моя“, „Патриотическая пѣсня“ и „Албанскій маршъ“. Критика на эти сочиненія была слѣдующая: фамилія Кочевыхъ популярная боевая фамилія Албаніи, давшая ей много разъ воеводъ „каптановъ“. Харл. Христо Кочевъ, представитель этого рода — молодой еще человекъ. Онъ находится въ настоящее время въ С.-Петербурѣ и, какъ мы слышали, находится въ числѣ студентовъ нашего университета. Пѣсенныя и мотивныя ноты очень характерны и весьма музыкальны. Въ пѣсенѣ много пѣть въ минуту речей, изъ которыхъ выдѣляется: „Патриотическая пѣсня“ — наиболѣе крупная въ изданіи. Изданіе посвящено Государственному Контролю Т. И. Филипову.

Изъ газеты „Свѣтъ“. Одинъ изъ передовыхъ людей Албаніи, или какъ сказано въ выданномъ ему отъ высшаго греческаго духовенства т. е. отъ Патриарха Константинопольскаго, патентъ, представитель „высшей, благородной фамиліи Харламій Христо Кочевъ, проникнутый сказанными выше идеями о просвѣщеніи своихъ соотечественниковъ въ національномъ духѣ, долго путешествовалъ изъ Албаніи, проповѣдуя всадъ распространеніе школы и введеніе богослуженія на родномъ языкѣ; на его горячія проповѣди албанскій народъ откликался съ живѣйшимъ сочувствіемъ; успѣхъ этихъ проповѣдей былъ такъ великъ, что даже среди грекомановъ въ настоящее время происходитъ поворотъ, и появляется стремленіе къ національной самостоятельности“. Нѣтъ никакого сомнѣнія въ томъ, что Албанскіе дѣятели, подобные Х. Х. Кочеву, заслужаютъ благоволеніе и в. султана турецкаго въ виду очевидной пользы ихъ дѣятельности, имѣющей своей цѣлью распространеніе цивилизаціи въ самой дикой турецкой провинціи.

Three fragments from ‘Alexandr the Macedonian, that’s Albanian’, Kochev, St. Petersburg, 1895

In the second excerpt (see above), Kochev continues: ‘The “Citizen” [Гражданинъ] newspaper has written a review entitled: “Motifs and Songs by H. H. Kochev”. A list of my creations reviewed is as follows: “Ode to the Russian Tsar Alexandr II” under the title “Pleven”, the novel “My Destiny”, “The Patriotic Song” and “Albanian March”. The

review of those works stressed: “The Kochev family is a combative Albanian family from which emerged an entire line of warrior “chieftains”. Harlampy Hristo Kochev, a representative of this kind, is still a young man. He is currently in St. Petersburg and from what we’ve heard, he is among the students of our University. His songs and motifs already published are very distinctive and quite musical. The publication includes five of the above-mentioned titles of which stands out “The Patriotic Song”, the largest in this edition’ (Kochev, ‘Alexandr Makedonsky, that is Albanian’, 1895, p. 33).

The third excerpt is extracted from the newspaper ‘Light’: ‘One of the most progressive representatives of Albania, or, as described by a senior leader of the Greek clergy (the Witness of Constantinopolitan Patriarch,), a representative of “the highest noble family, Harlampy Hristo Kochev, who’s imbued with the highest ideals for the education of his countrymen in the national spirit, travelled for a long time throughout Albania, giving messages on the dissemination of schools and preaching God’s word in his mother tongue. The Albanian people responded with lively empathy; the success of these sermon s was so great that, even among Greek sympathisers, they can see that there is a turn and a desire for national independence”. There is no doubt that Albanian activists, as in the case of H. H. Kochev, serve with the blessing of the Turkish sultan in the light of an obvious benefit of their activity, having the sole purpose of spreading civilization to the most savage Turkish province’ (Kochev, ‘Alexandr Makedonsky, i. e. Albanian’, 1895, pp. 33–34).

We do not know whether the opera *Skenderbeg* was performed in St. Petersburg because we have not been able to find the libretto or the music. However, Kochev's platform of the opera based on potential source material, including traditional Albanian folksongs and dance rhythms, is well-documented in Collector’s Handbook (Справочник Коллекционера) and other publications in Russian, Czech and German from the late 19th century. They include the lecture of 14th October 1895 in St. Petersburg and a concert on the island of Zofin in Prague, on December 21st 1895.



Kochev's lecture in Warsaw,
14 October 1895



Kochev's Concert in Prague,
21 December 1895



Complaints to Great Powers, dedicated to my dear people, by the representative of Albania, student of St. Petersburg Univ., H. H. Kochev; *Albanian Evening* – at Kononova Hall, St. Petersburg, 21st January 1895



But what seems to have left more traces of Kochev's creativity, except for 'Alexandr the Macedonian, i.e. Albanian' (1895), is the publication of 'Complaints to Great Powers' in defence of the Albanian cause (1894) and the 'Albanian Evening' concert given in St. Petersburg, in the Kononova Hall, on 21st January 1895. I visited the Kononova Hall in 2005, but I could not get any more information on the *Skenderbeg* opera. Future studies could fruitfully explore this issue further to provide evidence on whether the *Skenderbeg* score has ever existed *and if so* where it might now be.

The opera libretto would supposedly include a rich material written by Kochev himself, even if it would have been based on his forty-page essay 'Alexandr the Macedonian, i.e. Albanian' with its subheadings: 'The voice of the people – the voice of the Lord', 'The Purpose of Life', 'The Albanian Question' and particularly 'Dear Albanians', which also includes six of his poems. The musical material of the opera, as he himself claims, would contain Albanian songs and motifs, including his own compositions performed in the 'Albanian Evening' such as 'The Korça Song' (with verses in Albanian *Korçë e varfër, Korçë e dashur* {Poor Korçë, Loving Korçë}), 'Kiss me Strongly', 'Morning Star' (Зорка), 'Princess Maroussia' (Княгиня Маруся), 'The Siege of Pleven' (Осадъ Плевны), 'Local Albanian Dances and Songs'; they were sung in Albanian by a choir dressed in Albanian national costumes and directed by Kochev himself.

Scanderbeg's Figure in the Albanian Music of the Twentieth Century

Scanderbeg's figure within Albania has been regarded as an important factor in preserving the common bonds with Europe. When the *collapse* of the *Ottoman Empire* was *inevitable* and the Albanian national movement was at its height, the culture of our national renaissance era had a significant resurgence. Literature was characterised by patriotic feelings and a romantic tendency. Visual arts focussed much attention on expressions of romantic nationalism of Albania's history, such as the heroic era of Scanderbeg. Music was a strong ally in the rousing of the national spirit during the struggle for independence. In this intense period of national cultural affirmation, the

first musical figures of professional backgrounds and inspired by the same national ideal began to appear. Scanderbeg's deeds expressed and elevated in the memory of oral history, tradition and customs, became the idyllic source of inspiration. Two Albanians, Martin Gjoka and Fan S. Noli, composed on Scanderbeg's theme in the 1920s and 30s: the former a symphony and the latter a symphonic poem. In the post-Second World War period several works on the same theme were composed: music for the movie *The Great Warrior of Albania—Scanderbeg* by the Albanian Çesk Zadeja and the Russian Jurij Sviridov (1953), the opera *Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu* by Prenk Jakova (1968) and other composers such as Abdulla Grimci with his opera *Scanderbeg* and the Kosovan Fahri Beqiri with his tone poem *Scanderbeg*, but I will focus on only four of them.

The works devoted to Scanderbeg by Gjoka and Noli in the 1920s and 30s show that, although Albania's musical life in the first half of the 20th century was generally characterised by folklore and urban traditional music, during the 1930s a new era was emerging, that of the urban song interpreted by the art singers. The audiences seemed to enjoy the vocal concerts (sometimes interspersed with instrumental pieces), so they became not only one of the most evident demonstrations of art music in Albania, but also of cultural and national affirmation. As illustration, I'll mention some of the art music works of this period: *Two flowers on Scanderbeg's Grave* by Martin Gjoka (composed in Graz [?] and Shkodër between 1919 and 1922); *Albanian Rhapsody* by Murat Shehu (Chicago 1937); *Scanderbeg, A Tone Poem* by Fan S. Noli (Boston 1937); *Le pauvre Gaspard, A Song for Tenor and Orchestra* by Fan S. Noli (Boston 1937);¹⁷ *Byzantine Overture* by

¹⁷ Here are the Verlaine's lyrics in the *Le pauvre Gaspard*:

Ver les hommes des grandes villes / Je suis venu calme orphelin / Riches de mes seuls yeux tranquilles / Ils ne m'ont pas trouvé malin. / A vingt ans, un trouble nouveau / Sous le nom d'amoureuses flammes / M'a fait trouver belles les femmes / Elles ne m'ont pas trouvé beau. / Bien que sans patrie et sans roi / Et très brave ne l'étant guère / J'ai voulu mourir à la guerre / La mort n'a pas voulu de moi. / Suis-je né trop tôt ou trop tard? / Qu'est-ce que je fais en ce monde? / O vous tous, ma peine est profonde / Priez pour le pauvre Gaspard!

And here is Noli's translation in Albanian:

Kam ardhur unë, një jetim, zengjin prej sysh dhe belave, në njerëzit e kasabave, s'ma varnë, s'më gjetnë qesqin. Kur isha trim njëzet vjeçar, u përvëllova nga sevdatë, të gjitha gratë i desha, gra të bulura të gjitha i desha, s'më deshnë s'më lanë beqar. Pa vatan dhe pa mbret a gjak e pa patur zemër që të vrisnja, vajta të vdisnja në luftë, po vdekja s'më përfilli aspak. Kam ardhur

Fan S. Noli (Boston 1937); *Albanian Rhapsody* by Fan S. Noli (Boston 1937). None of these works were performed in Albania before *World War II era*. Also pertaining to this pre-war period are instrumental and vocal compositions written by Lec Kurti, Thoma Nasi and Mikel Koliqi, as well as the *Rhapsody for Orchestra Nr. 1* by Kristo Kono and another rhapsody by Pjetër Dungu. The last two were first performed in Tiranë in the early 1940s.

When I was the permanent conductor of the Albanian Radio & Television Symphony Orchestra, I recoded three out of four works dedicated to Scanderbeg and analysed below. The recordings, made between 1978 and 1990, have some limitations. They were made in Mono sound; at a time when in Europe Stereo techniques were widely used. Not only the recording parameters were far from the contemporary requirements, but the orchestral instruments were also of a very modest quality. After the 2000s on a personal initiative, some of these recordings were mastered with a view to using them as a tool in documenting and preserving their historic past. Turned into commercial CDs, they can demonstrate the potential of musical evidence as an important tool of historical investigation.

Martin Gjoka—*Two Flowers on Scanderbeg's Grave*, Symphony in Two Parts

My first contact with Martin Gjoka's score *Two Flowers on Scanderbeg's Grave* was in the State Archives in Tirana, in the 1980s. I obtained permission to photocopy the score and bring it to the recording studio of the Albanian Radio & Television Symphony Orchestra where I turned it into *the live orchestra sounds*. The composer called his work a 'Symphony for full Orchestra' and I believe that it is so, although some opinions expressed in Albanian music circles claimed that its compositional structure does not meet the criteria and satisfy the requirements of a symphony.

von'a tepër shpejtë, ç'po bënj në botë un'i mjeri, o shokë më mbyti qederi. Për mua lutuni o të drejtë, për mua të mjerin Gaspar.



Gjoka, *Two Flowers on Scanderbeg's Grave*,
Three variants of the Introduction of Gjoka's symphony

In conversations with foreign musicians I was struck by the fact that in Russia this work seems to be close to their music, while an experienced English musician related it to the legacy of English music. Isn't it surprising that musicians from Russia and England claim this work as their own? Meanwhile, I personally feel that this is thoroughly Albanian. What would after all define Albanian music? Traditional and modal tunes? Traditional rhythmic pattern and metre? Pentatonic modes? Augmented seconds? Polyphony? These components are of course related to native music, but would they be enough? Would other features be required such as adding *something* particular, *impressive and* demanding, something captivating that would symbolise flowers on the grave?

This romantic symphony has a unique musical character and belongs to the creative process of Gjoka's musical inspiration. It is a narrative composition dealing with the recollection of the glorious past of Arbëria and its legendary hero, Scanderbeg. The music is written in a form of an extended song for a symphony orchestra.

Gjoka wrote this symphony in two stages, between 1919 and 1922. Composed for a small orchestral formation, the work was designated as a *symphony in two parts*. In the 1930s Gjoka attempted to re-orchestrate the work for a large-scale orchestra, but this attempt remained unfinished. Based on just four pages of the scores available to me from the second and third versions, it is clear that Gjoka's intention of make the work more dynamic would have been achieved not by further developing themes *more* extensively and expanding the musical idea, but *simply by generating* more massive and powerful orchestral sounds to reflect an overall growth in symphonic proportions.

The full orchestration platform is vividly presented by the composer and any professional musician, passionate about Martin Gjoka, could complete the composer's unfinished business. Such cases are not rare in the history of world music, an obvious example being Mozart's Requiem.

The musical language of Gjoka's symphony is simple and sincere. Simplicity in his music comes from his subconscious, from his freedom of expression. Whereas his sincerity or genuine emotion could not exist if he did not transmit it to the people in his daily life. To project his inner creative voice, Gjoka chose a musical composition structure that would allow him to convey his idea. It is worth noting that at the time when Gjoka wrote this 'simple' symphony, Rachmaninov or Elgar also wrote works of this kind of inspiration, that is to say, of a romantic spirit in music, certainly more complicated in terms of ideas, form and orchestration.

Gjoka's music of the late Romantic style and dreamy romantic colours is said to have *captured* the spirit and *idiomatic flavours* of his local (Shkodran) expression and heritage. The opening theme of Gjoka's symphony is that of an idyllic meditation and refined melody. The second theme, in major key, is graceful and flowing. The chromaticism of the third theme or episode is reminiscent of Albania's northern mountain tunes. The patriotic marching character of a new theme is conveyed with dramatic fervour trying to evoke Scanderbeg's era. In the finale of this symphony, the march-like coda maintains hope and faith. Such march-like musical elements are consciously absorbed and adapted to Prenk Jakova's *Scanderbeg* opera. The mood and feeling of this modest symphony lie in the laconicism of musical perception, where the desire for the future life is given without triumph and exaltation, but merely by aesthetic and musical expressive means.

Albanian composers, Prenk Jakova and Çesk Zadeja, were inclined to borrow Gjoka's approach to musical expression by echoing his sentiments in their own compositions (they both composed major works on Scanderbeg).

It can clearly be said that with this work Martin Gjoka becomes the galvaniser of a specific Albanian musical language that motivated many Shkodra composers who have been at the forefront of Albanian art musicians. In my view, *Two Flowers on Skanderbeg's Grave*, is

perhaps the symbiosis of what would later be defined as a melodic style based on the musical folklore of highlands region above *Shkodra* (*Mbi-Shkodër*), mixed here and there with the traditional urban songs of the city of Shkodra itself.

The more the time passes, the more I feel privileged I was able to enjoy for the first time the true warmth of Martin Gjoka's work.

Fan S. Noli – *Scanderbeg*, A Tone Poem (Symphonic Poem)

Among the orchestral and vocal works Fan S. Noli composed in Boston was his symphonic poem (tone poem) for full orchestra titled *Scanderbeg*.¹⁸ A detailed written analysis of the music is presented by Noli himself. Here it is:

¹⁸ Prior to the presentation of *thematic analysis and content analysis* of this symphonic poem, some information about Noli's musical education and compositions would be necessary. For this I'll refer to Noli's own evidence:

Musical Education

Studied Byzantine Church Music with my father was a cantor in my native town, Ibrik-Tepe, in Thrace. Russian Church of Boston since 1908.

Studied composition with Warren Storey Smith at the New England Conservatory of Music and with Meyer at the College of Music of Boston University.

Graduated with a degree of Bachelor of Music at the Conservatory in 1938 majoring in composition MA Boston University, 1939, majoring in musical research.¹⁸

Compositions

'Scanderbeg', a tone-poem for orchestra.

A Byzantine Overture for orchestra, performed by the Conservatory Orchestra, 1938.

A Song for tenor and orchestra, based on 'Le Pauvre Gaspard', by Paul Verlaine.

Psalm 137 'By the Rivers of Babylon', four-part *a capella* song for mixed choir, performed by W. P. A. Chorus, 1938.

Noli published an anthology of anthems of the Albanian Orthodox Church for mixed choir, which is now used in the Albanian Churches in the United States.

Albanian Rhapsody for full orchestra (on Albanian folk-songs)

He also wrote the book *Beethoven and French Revolution* (New York, 1947), published by the Albanian Federation *Vatra*, dealing with the life of Beethoven and his political ideology. Among those who commented on this book were George Bernard Shaw who wrote: 'It is the work of a first-rate critic and biographer. I read it through from end to end with the utmost satisfaction, being myself a connoisseur as musician, critic, and artist-philosopher by profession'. The composer Jean Sibelius wrote: 'I have read the book with much interest. I thought I knew all about Beethoven, but in your book, there is much that was new to me'. The German novelist Thomas Mann wrote: 'I have read your book with interest and fascination. It is a real contribution to the Beethoven literature'. More than thirty other scholars wrote their appreciative comments on the same book.

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Arkivat Qendrore të Shtetit (Central State Archives), Tiranë.

This composition is based on Longfellow's poem 'Scanderbeg' from the 'Tales of a Wayside Inn'. George Castriot Scanderbeg (1412-1468) was taken as a hostage by Sultan Murad II of Turkey when the latter conquered Albania at the beginning of the XV century. Scanderbeg was brought up in Sultan Murad's court and served in his armies as a cavalry officer. In 1443 when the Turks were defeated by king Ladislav of Hungary in Nish, Serbia, Scanderbeg returned to Albania and liberated the country from the Turkish yoke. His dramatic return to Albania is the subject of Longfellow's poem.

The symphonic poem begins with Scanderbeg's theme, announced by the trumpets and repeated by the full orchestra. The oriental background, in which Scanderbeg was brought up, is suggested by the Call of the Muezzin in the Phrygian mode and an oriental dance, given by an English Horn and the strings respectively.

A lively fugue, derived from this oriental dance, follows. At its conclusion the cellos and the English Horn in unison announce a pleading theme in the Byzantine mode of the two augmented seconds. It is Albania's appeal to Scanderbeg to come to her rescue. Scanderbeg hesitates to undertake a campaign against the Turks who, in this period, were at the height of their military power. But Albania is not alone in her plea. The whole of Christendom, threatened by the Turks, joins her entreaties with the Phrygian chorale, immortalised by Bach in his Saint Mathew's Passion 'O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden'. It is introduced by the French Horn and then taken up by the organ and the full orchestra.

Dosja (Folder), No. 74: *Shënime rreth historisë së veglave muzikore* (Notes About the History of Musical Instruments);

Dosja (Folder), No. 71: Gregorian Music, by F. S. Noli, History of Church Music, Boston University, Dec. 15, 1938; Lutheran Music, by F. S. Noli, History of Church Music, Boston University, Jan. 19, 1939;

Dosja (Folder), No. 73: R. Strauss & C. Monteverdi.

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MEMO (June 14, 1965): When Bishop Noli graduated from the New England Conservatory of Music in 1938 each senior student had to compose one orchestral symphonic work. The student orchestra played the pieces only once. So perhaps some of your musicians at the University of Tirana Music School may wish to improve the music in spots. May they enjoy these compositions as much as Bishop Noli did! Boston, Mass.

Best wishes,

Meim Johns, Vangjeli Theodos

Scanderbeg yields, he makes up his mind and only waits for a favourable occasion which he finds in the battle of Nish, northeast of Albania, where Turks were fronted by the European Crusaders under the auspices of the Pope of Rome.

The image shows a page from a musical score titled "SCANDERBEG" by Fan Noli. The score is for a full orchestra and includes parts for various instruments and voices. The tempo is marked "Moderato (4=78)". The score begins with a trumpet fanfare, followed by the Scanderbeg theme. The score includes parts for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Horn, Trumpet, Trombone, Tuba, Snare Drum, Cymbal, Triangle, and Organ. The score also includes vocal parts for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The score is written in G major and 2/4 time. The title "SCANDERBEG" is prominently displayed at the top. The composer's name "F. S. NOLI" is written in the top right corner. The score is a page from a larger work, as indicated by the page number "242" in the top left corner.

Fan Noli, *Scanderbeg*, begins with Scanderbeg's theme, announced by the trumpets

This battle is depicted by reminiscences at variations of the Scanderbeg theme, Albania's plea and Muezzin Call reaching its climax with the so-called the Crusaders Anthem, given by the organ and the full orchestra. Scanderbeg's return to Albania is hinted by a

horseman's ride and two Albanian folk-songs. The recapitulation with the Muezzin Call suggests the Turkish domination in Albania, while the concluding Eastern Anthems of the Byzantine Church proclaim her liberation by Scanderbeg. The organ and the Church anthems serve to emphasize the religious and crusading character of Scanderbeg's campaigns.

Çesk Zadeja & Sviridov – *Skanderbeg*, Movie Score

'The Great Warrior of Albania—Skanderbeg', is a movie which earned the International Prize at the 1954 Cannes Film Festival. A. Vertinski (the Russian actor who played the role of Doge of Venice in the film) wrote on February 10th, 1954: 'The film crew left for Albania. There took place all historical battles of Skanderbeg and the whole country took part in them. Albanian composers provided us with authentic folk songs and dances of the time. Peasants descended from the mountains to give us their authentic folk costumes of that era, stored as a shrine in grandfathers' chests. In the massive scenes there was not a single figurant (no extras). The make-up artist's hand didn't touch any face, costumiers did not sew any costumes—the people gave everything. ... In the evenings in Yalta, where part of this film was shot, after filming, we often sat with them on the seashore and they sang to us the songs of their homeland. Their songs were sad—the remnants of Turkish captivity passed through them— but their charm conquered us. A month later, our entire studio was already singing in Albanian.... A professor and art historian Alex Buda came to help us from Albania, with whom we consulted all the time. ... The music was written by the Albanian composer Çesk Zadeja and our Georgi Sviridov' (Vertinski, 10 February 1954).

The renowned Albanian composer, Çesk Zadeja, in 1953 was just at the start of his composition studies in Moscow. Zadeja and Sviridov built an excellent relationship throughout the filmmaking process for the music of 'Skanderbeg'; the former selected all the main musical themes of the film by adopting, transforming or drawing on traditional Albanian motifs, while the latter, as a master of orchestration and thematic development, was the one who composed the film score. The vocal romance for the bass voice, 'O Ye Mountains' (O ju male),

Zadeja had composed beforehand, and was well-suited to the movie narrative.

One of the most appealing musical motifs of the film is that based on the song ‘The mountains are filled with snow’ (Kenkan mbushun mallet me borë). The tune in the film is transformed into a cavalcade nature of a truly epic-heroic character (see the score below). This song motif has appeared perhaps for the first time in the early 1920s in a manuscript of Father Martin Gjoka. An audio recording of the same tune belongs to the early 1940s, found in a soundtrack of a documentary produced by the Italians in 1943 (Istituto Luce), entitled ‘La Grande Albania’, made undoubtedly for reasons of their war propaganda. The instrumental motif of ‘The mountains are filled with snow’, in this documentary if of an archaic and rudimentary nature.

The Albanian Radio&Television Symphony Orchestra and myself performed and recorded on stage the music of the film ‘Skanderbeg’ for the first time in 2012, nearly 60 years after it was recorded at the Moscow Cinema Studio by the Moscow Cinema Orchestra. The reason for this is that the musical score remained in Moscow and that accessing it was entirely impossible due to the *relationship breakdown* between the USSR and Albania in 1961.

It is worth pointing out that Albanians had listened to this music indefinitely through the film ‘Skanderbeg’, which *was broadcasted* by Radio Tirana since 1953 thanks to the Moscow recording.



Sviridov-Zadeja, ‘The Great Warrior of Albania—Skanderbeg’,
Movie Score: ‘The Return’ pp. 3, 12, 13

Prenek Jakova – *Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu*, Opera in three acts and epilogue

The first Albanian opera entitled *Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu* (George Castriota Scanderbeg) was composed in 1968. Its composer was Prenek Jakova, whom I got to know when the opera was put on stage in the autumn and winter of 1967. That happened during the rehearsals with the opera orchestra, where I was playing in its *violin section*. I was already acquainted with the librettist, Lllazar Siliqi, who worked in close collaboration with the composer.

From the fourth desk of the first violins where I sat, I attentively observed the composer who was so much involved with his *Skanderbeg*. I watched Jakova's constant state of anxiety as he approached the orchestra pit to communicate with the conductor about his observations on musical tempi and stage actions. He was aware of the task he had undertaken: to portray the Albanian national hero, Scanderbeg, in musical retelling of his life and evoke ideas of resistance. The libretto was based on the books by Barleti (1508) and Sirdani (1926). Jakova believed deeply in his ability to reach his goals. After many difficulties the opera was performed several times at Tirana's Opera House in 1967 and in the later years some of its arias and chorales *remained* an active part of the Albanian *vocal repertoire*. The opera was not performed for several decades. However, after it was restaged in the city of Shkodra in 2018, its values re-emerged.

Looking back when the opera was staged for the first time in January 1967, I felt then that it wasn't going the way Jakova would have wished. The composer had written a long opera, over three hours, with a concept and conviction of his own, based, of course, upon his own performing skills, his creative experience and his commitment to the Shkodra amateur musicians. It is worth mentioning that Jakova had not attended any Conservatoire to learn the rigorous doctrines and disciplines of composition. That was his privilege of freedom. In the history of world music there are a number of great composers who have been partially or wholly self-taught, that is, who have learned the rules of musical structure, orchestration, harmony and counterpoint, by following their own learning process, in other words, becoming self-directed *learners*. Consequently, their music has been notable for its

imagination and *vocality in melodic* construction, with their mode of expression being *sui generis*. *Jakova's music was flowing through his veins*; it was a 'movement of *sound* that reached *your soul*' – as *Plato stated*. He got his inspiration from his inner being. Jakova liked the alliteration of the phrase, maintained the sense of balance, trusted his intuition, deeply appreciated the literary text and embodied it in himself by composing the music in close relationship with the subject matter.

Meanwhile, preparations for *Scanderbeg* were coming to an end, and I was always watching Jakova from the orchestra pit in the hope that I would be able to perceive how he would respond to the endless suggestions coming from the 'parterre' (stalls), namely the State Commission created for the 500th anniversary of the death of the National Hero, Scanderbeg. They said that the opera was long and had to be shortened, that Siliqi's libretto had some deficiencies, especially in the portrayal of characters such as Venetian, Franciscan, Albanian princes, Skanderbeg himself, and others.

As it is known, Socialist Realism is a style of idealized realistic art that was developed in the Soviet Union between 1932 and the late 1980s. It spread to other socialist countries, including Albania, after World War II. It is an aesthetic theory of literature, art, and *music* which aims to develop *social* consciousness in an evolving *socialist* state. Composers did not initially perceive Socialist Realism as a dogmatic set of rules, but rather helped to develop it as a motivated and stimulated artistic theory. Socialist Realism also appealed to the popular aspiration among Chinese artists for a modernisation of art. Following China launched its Cultural Revolution in 1966, Albania too initiated its own Cultural and Ideological Revolution. The repertoire of foreign operas and ballets was not allowed to be performed. Artists were instead urged to promote national creations irrespective of their musical quality. In China, at that time (partly taken up by Soviet practice) the discussion on the new musical works was a collective norm. Several officials with no musical background were courageous enough to give opinions and make suggestions on the new works based on 'the voice of the masses'! Jakova's opera could not escape this collective debate which often involved 'specialists' of the extra-musical fields. Jakova wanted to defend Siliqi's libretto at all costs and so he did as much as he could. Along with the impact of 'advice' and

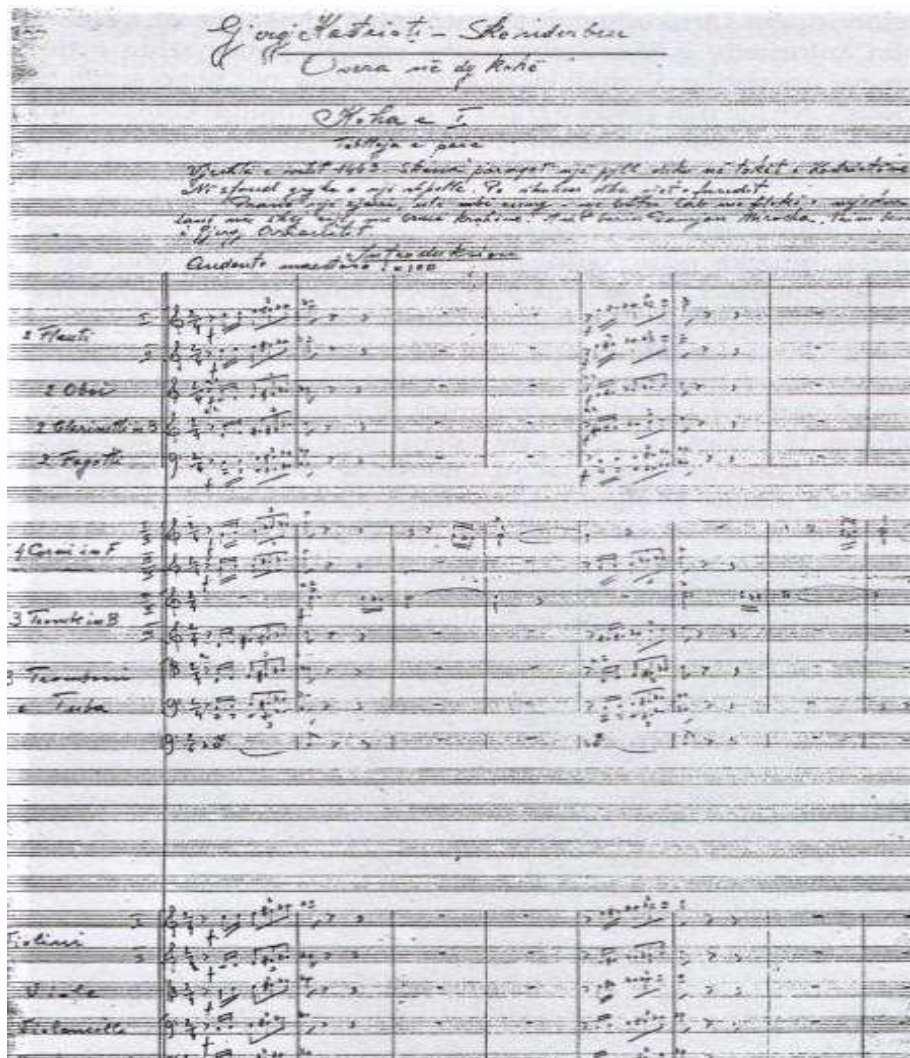
‘recommendations’ on the libretto, music was also affected. Thus, arias and scenes were cut and musical characters were impinged upon, the structure of the work was seriously shaken.

The premiere was approaching for the 17th of January 1968, and the orchestration of the opera was not yet ready. It was proposed that some of his colleagues and friends, Mustafa Krantja, Çesk Zadeja, Tish Daija and Tonin Harapi, would assist in this process. The composer felt bad for all the interventions in the libretto and music that were made without his consent. Here is how a leading film director, Xhanfise Keko, described in her memoirs that crucial moment of Jakova’s life: ‘After trying hard to persuade officials who had decided not to surrender, it was the artist who surrendered by throwing the score on the table, a gesture which was followed by these words: “Take it and do whatever you want with it. Verdi wrote three-hour long opera for a prostitute and you are rejecting a three-hour opera for a National Hero!” After these words, Jakova felt more than upset, offended’ (Keko 2008, 35). The ‘consensual restructuring’ of the opera became a fact and rehearsals intensified. The stage performers and pit-orchestra musicians (including myself) were mobilised to give their best to achieve a good performance. Xhoni Athanas, for whom the role was actually written, looked like a true Skanderbeg.¹⁹ His (Scanderbeg’s) leitmotif gave expression to heroism and jubilation. For Jakova the Albanian historical musical drama, the action of multiple characters, the massive chorales, the powerful arias like that of Leka and Donika, all these components took precedence.

After several opera performances, I realised that Jakova was waiting for a signal on the assessment of his work from the top of the Communist party leadership. An article was written ten days after the premiere, a discussion was held at the League of Artists after a few months and the outcome was that the opera lacked an overall sense of dramatic purpose and essential musical development. A man like Prenk Jakova, who so strongly devoted himself to music, an idealistic, passionate, hardworking and ever-present, found it hard to swallow the bitterness of failure. He believed that failure was only momentary and did not mean defeat. However, that made him suffer. Since then he

¹⁹ Other roles in the opera were sung by Nina Mula, Ramiz Kovaçi, Kristaq Paspali, Hysen Kurti and Gaço Çako.

composed almost nothing. He *only lived a year and a half after* the premiere of his *Scanderbeg*.



P. Jakova, *Gjergj Kastrioti-Skënderbeu*, Leka's aria—Gaqo Çako

During his lifetime Jakova devoted a great part of his energy to musical theatre, including his operas *Mrika* and *Skanderbeg*, with the latter being his swan song. The composer considered his act of musical

creation as a kind of obligation to his friends, his family members, his colleagues and his fellow citizens. Above all, Jakova felt an intense musical obligation to serve *his country, and he meant it*.

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As it can be seen from this essay, during the last four centuries Scanderbeg has been the subject of many musical compositions and an inspiration for other branches of art, performing, literary and visual. As Fan Noli concludes in his book about Scanderbeg, our national hero ‘did much to save Italy and Europe from the greatest calamity that could have befallen them—the Turkish conquest. His share in this highly important service can hardly be overestimated’.

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