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Research Article

The emergence of Albanian art music: Fan S. Noli and the works of the first generation of composers

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Abstract

This study examines the origins of Albanian professional music in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period marked by national movements, state-building processes, and the cultural transformations that accompanied the Albanian National Renaissance. The paper focuses on the role of the first Albanian composers and musicians who, drawing on folk tradition, patriotic spirit, and their professional training both within and beyond Albanian lands, laid the foundations of cultivated Albanian music. In this context, particular attention is given to Fan S. Noli as a multifaceted figure whose contribution was significant in instrumental, symphonic, ecclesiastical, and musicological creation, as well as to other figures such as Palok Kurti, Lec Kurti, Martin Gjoka, Mikel Koliqi, Frano Ndoja, Thoma Nasi, Harallamb Kristo Koço, and Vladimir Kastrioti. The study argues that the emergence of Albanian professional music was not an isolated artistic phenomenon, but part of a broader national and cultural process in which European influences were interwoven with the sources of Albanian musical tradition. In conclusion, it is emphasized that these authors prepared the aesthetic, professional, and national ground on which the Albanian school of cultivated music would later be built.

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Introduction

The history of Albanian classical music is generally associated with the twentieth century, when Albanian music began to take shape within a broader European artistic framework (Hysi, 1991, p. 31). However, many scholars trace the beginnings of Albanian professional musical art to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this context, one of the earliest and most significant milestones is Palok Kurti's wind orchestral piece The Union of Albania, composed in Shkodër in 1880, which is widely regarded as the first work of cultivated Albanian music (Tole, 2004, p. 34).

These developments emerged during a crucial period in Albanian history, marked by national awakening, the League of Prizren, the struggles for independence, the Balkan Wars, and the First World War. Under such historical circumstances, the first forms of professional music in Albania were closely connected with patriotic spirit, secular expression, and the influence of popular musical culture. Initially expressed through choirs and wind bands, especially in Shkodër, this new musical movement gradually expanded into broader instrumental, orchestral, and vocal genres.

Within this framework, a number of musicians and intellectuals played a key role in shaping the foundations of Albanian professional music. Their contribution helped move Albanian musical culture beyond a narrowly folkloric sphere and toward a more cultivated artistic language, while still preserving strong links with national tradition. This study focuses on that formative period and on the contribution of some of the earliest Albanian composers to the emergence of professional national music.

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The connection to Kosovo's musical and cultural history is particularly evident in Palok Kurti's The Union of Albania, a wind-band march composed in Shkodër in 1880 and dedicated to the League of Prizren. The dedication offers an example of how a political movement centred in Prizren inspired a work in the early repertoire of Albanian art music. Against this historical background, the present study aims to examine the contributions of Fan S. Noli and other first-generation composers to the emergence of Albanian art music. It considers how their musical training, engagement with folk traditions, and use of European musical forms shaped their works, and how selected compositions expressed the patriotic aspirations of the period.

Method

This study is based on a qualitative, historical-musicological, and analytical-descriptive approach. The main method employed is content analysis of the sources addressed in the article, through an examination of the principal compositional figures, the historical context in which they worked, and the fundamental characteristics of their creative output. Since the article does not present an explicitly stated methodology, the present methodological framework has been reconstructed on the basis of the way the material itself is organized.

From a historical perspective, the study focuses on the period from the late nineteenth century to the first decades of the twentieth century, linking the development of Albanian professional music with key events in national history, such as the League of Prizren, the Independence of Albania, and the processes involved in the formation of a modern Albanian cultural identity. This historical approach serves to explain that the birth of cultivated music was not merely an aesthetic evolution, but part of a broader social, political, and national dynamic.

From a musicological perspective, the study applies an analysis of authorial profiles and of the types of musical creativity they cultivated. For this reason, figures such as Palok Kurti, Fan S. Noli, Lec Kurti, Martin Gjoka, Thoma Nasi, and other authors are examined, with emphasis placed on their professional training, the musical genres they cultivated, their relationship with folklore, ecclesiastical music, instrumental and symphonic creation, and the patriotic function of music. This method makes it possible to identify both the common features and the differences among these authors, as well as to assess the place each of them occupies in the origins of Albanian professional music.

In addition, the comparative method is employed, since the article consistently places European influences on cultivated music in relation to Albanian national elements. In this framework, attention is given to the Western musical forms used by these authors, such as the sonata, string quartet, symphonic poem, urban romance, liturgical music, and compositions for wind band, as well as to the ways in which these forms are intertwined with folk motives, patriotic sensibility, and broader national cultural functions.

The source base of the study consists of the literature cited in the article, including works by Hysi, Tole, Prela Shuteriqi, Sokoli, and Kalemi, as well as biographical data, historical references, and descriptions of the works of the composers under examination. Through this body of sources, the study seeks to construct a synthetic yet well-argued overview of the emergence and early consolidation of Albanian professional music.

Bishop Fan S. Noli as the most prominent intellectual and the Albanian nation, whose contribution has taken on its own uniqueness, cannot be compared to anything and is like no other. Renaissance poet, writer, peerless translator, extraordinary musician, high-level musicologist, meticulous politician of the European level, founder of the Albanian autocephalous church and the liturgy of the Albanian Orthodox church. Who can be compared to him? In which country in the world has such a person existed? Who could have contributed "with the pen" to Albanianism more than him? Here is how some of the great Albanian intellectuals describe his figure: "Father Noli, by his culture and character, often reminds me of the churchmen of Italian origin" (Konica F., March 26, 2014). "Fan Noli is a central character in the history of our people. This man symbolizes the synthesis of the virtues of the Albanian race" (Dosti H., March 26, 2014). "Stefan S. Noli, one of the most prominent personalities who expressed the Albanian nation from his own gender" (Koliqi E., March 26, 2014). "Complex and ingenious is the personality of Fan S. Noli... for forty or so years only in the service of an ideal: the Albanian one" (Kuteli M., March 26, 2014).

Noli, the instrument and the vocal. Fan S. Noli received his initial music lessons in childhood. He was the son of an Orthodox priest, therefore familiar with the ceremonial of the Orthodox church, where prayers are performed by singing. Meanwhile, he had also learned to play the flute, which he did not separate from himself even in very difficult moments of the social movement that he led. Playing the instrument made Noli relax from many troubles of everyday life, but, on the other hand, it made him enjoy his beautiful repertoire, thus fulfilling the pleasure of artistic tastes[2].



Photo 1. Tirana Municipality Wind Band founded by Fan S. Noli, 1924 (photo on line)

This was the reason why in 1924, while serving as the Prime Minister of Democratic Justice, he formed the capital's Municipality's musical band, which later took the name "Albanian Royal Band", today OFFA (*Wind Band of Army Forces*), and where he would play it himself, as the first flute. "46 years after the creation of the first wind band in Shkodër, in the late 1800s, former Albanian Prime Minister Fan Noli created the wind band of Tirana." (Online newspaper "Shqiptari", 27. 02. 2016). In addition, the very great and fundamental fact of significance for Albanian instrumental and chamber music is the composition of a sonata for violin and piano in three movements. And last but not least in importance, in all aspects, is the extraordinary and very complete contribution of his text "Hymnoren" as well as "Psalm 137", a religious work but treated according to the principles of professional classical music.

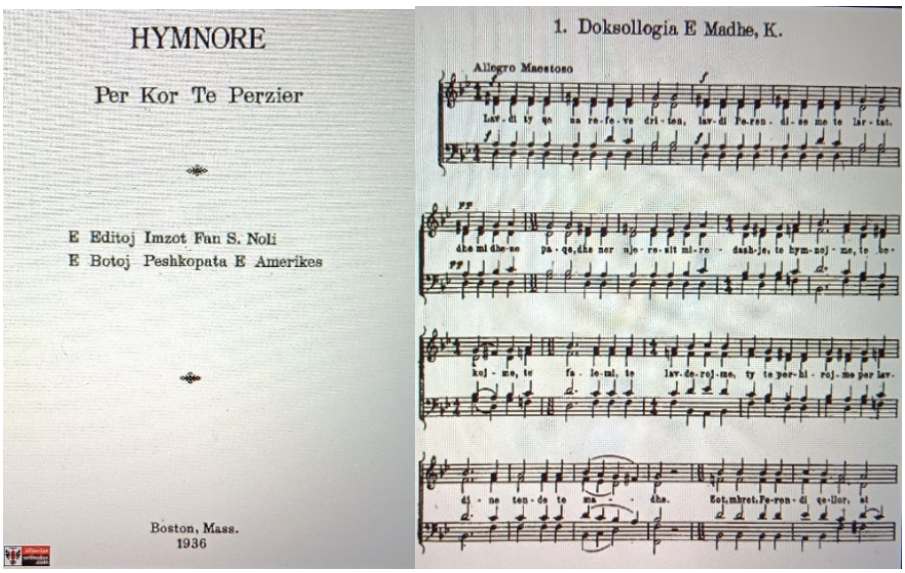


Figure 1. Fan S. Noli "The Church Hymnal" (manuscript)

Noli, symphonic works. Noli studied composition and musicology at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, where he graduated in 1938. One of the first musical works for orchestra, which he composed while still

[2] Noli himself, in his speech given in 1963, says: ".... when I went to Albania, knowing the great troubles we had to face, I also took a flute, so that here and there I could forget about the troubles. The first day when I found time to play the flute a little, I heard this conversation taking place, in a nearby cafe: 'How are things in Albania? Bad or not! But what is the reason? Eh, the reason? The Prime Minister plays the flute and Albania burns, — let's do the math!"

studying, "Albanian Rhapsody", relying on the motifs of Albanian folk dance songs, emphasizing with the language of classical music many features of the musical creativity of our people. But Noli composed another work in the same period, which evoked the greatness of Albania's history and shed light on its militant and freedom-loving identity. The work is a symphonic poem titled "Skanderbeg", which is based on the poem of the same name of Henry Longfellou[3]. From the latter, he has taken not only the general artistic and literary concept, but also many episodes that are developed along the lines of the program and that constitute the entirety of Henry Longfellow's work. With the laconic quote "Skanderbeg", Noli meant that there was no need for further details. Let the listener himself evoke the historical events of that unforgettable epic of the Albanians that inspired and guided Noli to compose this great and serious work of cultivated Albanian music.

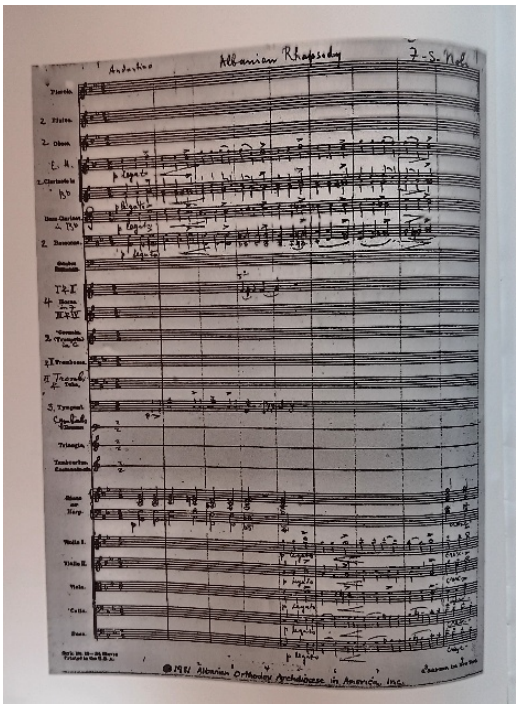


Figure 2. Fan S. Noli “Albanian Rhapsody” (manuscript)

In this context, very rich and very special of Fan Noli's musical creativity, also includes the vocal ballad for tenor, choir and orchestra, "Poor Gaspar", composed on the very attractive and emotional poetic text of the French poet, Paul Varlaine. According to these verses, the fatality and tragedy that Verlaine transmits in his ballad, are treated musically by Noli with tense situations, contrary to any romantic and sentimental spirit, as was the case in many similar cases, the contemporary music, which had begun to be composed and developed in Albania, until then, limited to its popular and folklore domain. As prof. Zana Prela Shuteriqi rightly writes, “Noli, so to speak, here goes to the end of evil, not sparing in any case, not even the funereal tones. But, on the other hand, the excessive consistency towards following the text, leads Noli to quote the melodies of the “Internationale” and “American anthem” hymns, which distance his music from the spirit and atmosphere of Verlaine’s poetic verses” (Prela Shuteriqi Z., 2019, p.194). This ballad, along with the "Byzantine Overture", which were performed by the Boston Conservatory choir and orchestra in 1938, at the end of his Bachelor's studies, were another special interest of the author, not simply for the techniques of great vocal, orchestral and religious music, but, as in the case of Varlaine's text, also for the social issues it raises. In a faithful and direct comparison with the suffering lives of the people in Albania, the author would denounce the low economic level of the people and their misfortunes and backwardness, due to the great and daily existential shortages. For this reason, the communist regime of the time in Albania banned the work and it was never mentioned.

Noli, musicology and writings. When we talked about Noli's activity as an instrumentalist, we witnessed that playing the instrument allowed him, on the one hand, to relax from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, but, on the other hand,

[3] Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, the literary poem “Skanderbeg”, written in 1863 by the most famous poet, is dedicated to the legendary Albanian hero, and his gestures on the battlefield.

to enjoy the repertoire, thus fulfilling the satisfaction of his artistic tastes. We added that in this way, he began to preserve in his memory, all these literary and dramatic concepts, as well as many musical features from traditional and contemporary composers, which became part of his consciousness, such as Schubert and Beethoven. And so; impressions, memories, dreams and youthful desires, when the right moment comes, at the right time, appear, take shape and become reality. More out of his passion, but also because of his deep and brilliant culture, Noli specialized in the field of musical research at the Boston University College of Music and concluded with the musicological study "Beethoven and the French Revolution", which was noted and appreciated by the most prominent European intellectual figures of the 20th century. No matter how research-scientific this article may be, we would not be able to bring any innovation, at best, if we simply did not leave room for the impressions, thoughts, statements, or conclusions reached by some of the most prominent figures in art, science, or the American academic world of the 20th century regarding Noli's musicological work "Beethoven and the French Revolution". George Bernard Shaw: "You have confused your vocation when you entered the Holy Order. This book of yours is neither a priest's prayer nor a hagiography, but the work of a first-hand critic and biographer.". Jean Sibelius: "I read the book with great interest. I thought I knew everything about Beethoven, but there, in your book, there are many new things for me." Thomas Mann: "I read it with interest and was fascinated by your book. It is a real contribution to the literature on Beethoven." [4]. Meanwhile, Noli has also written about Claudio Monteverdi, Richard Strauss, Franz Schubert and Arturo Toscanini.

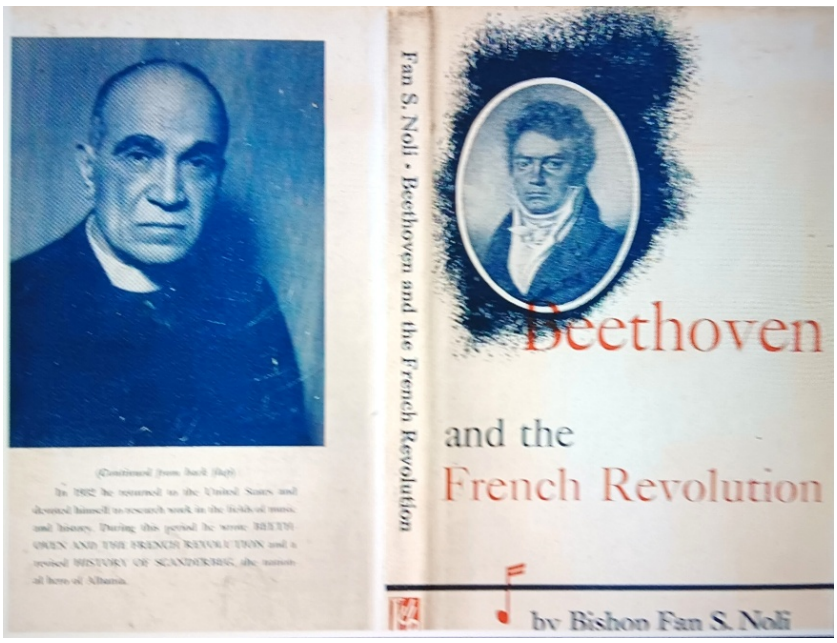


Photo2. Fan S. Noli "Beethoven and the French Revolution" (foto on line)

As we have already underlined, the Albanian late period of the 19th century and the early 20th century is characterized by important changes, all of which are related to the air of freedom that permeated the Albanian environment and to the progressive movements that were distinguished among the nuances of this environment. We would also recall here the "Shkodra miracle", the city where in the periods we are talking about, professional Albanian music was born, with a rapid and unusual development, which would resonate throughout the entire Albanian territory and to encounter a reality similar to it we would have to go somewhere far from the borders. Here, too, to complete the necessary framework, we would definitely add, the oriental and Byzantine influence, of the Albanian and pan-Balkan environments, where prominent Albanian personalities such as Niketë Dardani, Jan Kukuzeli and other artists such as painters and architects had strongly contributed. Meanwhile, many other Albanians gave their original contribution to the art and sciences of

[4] Personalities of the American academic world who have praised Noli's book: Warren Story Smith, J. Duane Squires, Professor Kenneth Conant, Professor Robert Moody, Professor Geneva Drinkwater, Professor George Madsen, Floyd Dean, Norine Robards, Walter Piston, Professor Aleksandër Vasiliev, Professor Charles Huse, Professor Camillo Merlino, Professor Kenneth Setton, University of Pennsylvania, Professor Alfred Meyer, Professor S. M. Waxman, Professor Frank Nowak, Mrs. Caroline Urie, George La Piana, Robert Lee Wolfe, Professor Warren O. Ault, Doctor Edward K. Sawyer, Doctor Harry Messenger, Max Maynard, Karl Geiringer, Professor Clyde Kluckhohn, Professor Cal Mc-Kinley, Harper's Magazine, March 1948, Harper's Magazine, March 1948, Cleveland News, December 31, 1947, Juliette Laine, in Los Angeles News, October 25, 1947, Herbert F. Peyser, Musical America Magazine, December 1, 1949.

music, and were included very early in the history of world music, in which they were commemorated with honor, but above all they have also played an invaluable role in the configuration of new Albanian music.

Lec Kurti. One of the first professionally trained composers was Lec Kurti, the son of Palok Kurti. In the years 1906-1916 he studied theory and composition at the Pesaro. Italia, music conservatory becoming a diligent professional composer, who wrote many pieces in various musical genres Kurti composed in those years, among other things: a Sonata for piano, a Sonata for violin and piano, a String Quartet, a Trio for violin, cello and piano, 2 works for Symphony Orchestra, Variations for piano, various piano miniatures, but also for violin, several romances for voice and piano, which were promoted by the author from 1909 onwards. Also, in 1913, he composed the "March for Prince Vidin", appointed at that time by the great powers, as the king of Albania; a little later, he also wrote a national anthem with lyrics by Gjergj Fishta, entitled "Porsi fleta e engjëllit t'zotit", as well as the opera entitled "Arbëresha", in three acts, in 1915.

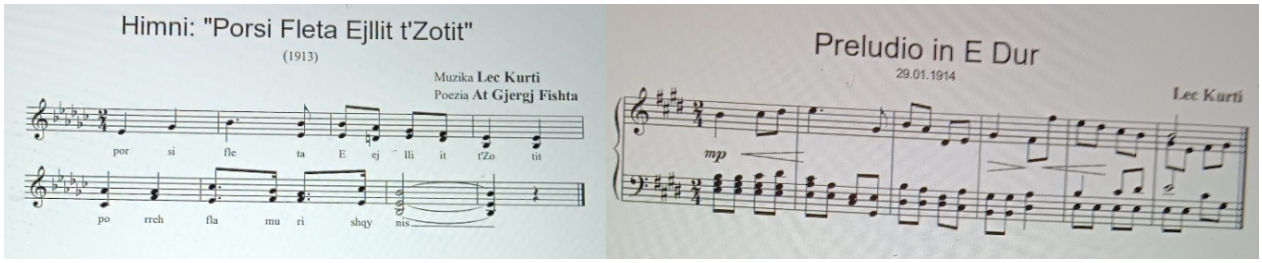


Figure 3. Lec Kurti "Like the Sheet of God's Ejllit" and "Prelude in E Dur" for solo piano (manuscripts)

He also wrote, Chamber music, sonatas, quartets, in addition to opera or vocal romances, were firmly embedded in his musical repertoire and brought about, as a result, creative practices, practices that were very close and new, similar to those of all of Europe and the entire civilized world.. However, despite this diverse variation of creativity in different forms and genres and despite the attempt to somehow refer to Albanian folk motifs, this music failed to have any visible and influential impact on later Albanian music. As might be expected, it also failed to have any hopeful impact on the patriotic movements, but also on the professional movements in the Albanian musical culture of that time. Thus, it is thought that in part, Lec Kurti's works, remaining as school works, failed to be appreciated because they sounded distant or foreign. This, both for the musical tastes of the public and for the historical-political and cultural situation of the country that required encouragement for a national and patriotic spirit. In terms of musical creativity, Lec Kurti remains the first professional composer of Albanian music, who produced, in addition to a few genres and vocal forms, also genres of instrumental music.
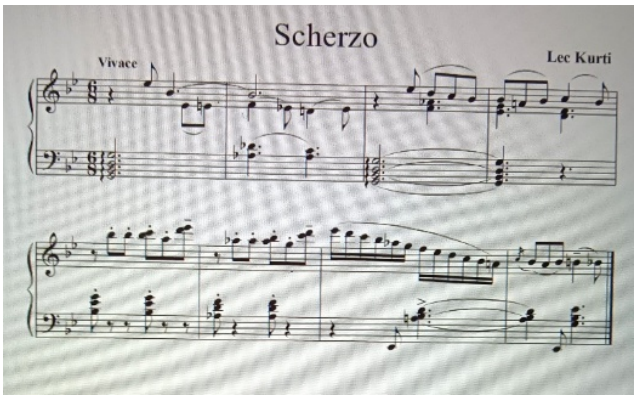


Figure 4. Lec Kurti "Scherzo" for piano solo (manuscript)

Vladimir Gjergj Kastriot Skënderbeu. According to the well-known European scholar Prof. Ramadan Sokoli, the Kastriots of Russia come from the door of Gjergj Kastriot (Sokoli R., February 20, 2026). Data on this important author of the period of formation and consolidation of the Russian school of music come to us mainly from the correspondence of the composer of Albanian origin with Aleksandr S. Dargomyžskij "You are talented ... Your letter, dear friend Kastriot, made me very happy. It showed me that you remember me, and at the same time brought me the news that you remain faithful to the Muses" (Sokoli R., February 20, 2026), but also from other sources of the time. Vladimir Kastrioti maintained a special friendship and collaboration with the great musical figures of that period in Russia: "Musical

evenings were organized in his apartment, sometimes attended by two of the most prominent composers of Russian classical music, Mikhail Ginka and Alexander Dargomyzhsky" (Sokoli R., February 20, 2026). According to historical sources, Vladimir Kastriot Skanderbeg left behind a series of musical writings, among which we can mention several romances composed on the poems of the poet M.I. Lermontov as well as a dramatic cantata accompanied by Quartets. In addition to these, he also left several string quartets: "With the first quartet he was represented in a concert organized on March 12, 1849 for the benefit of the family of the composer Varlamov; while with the second quartet he participated in a competition announced in 1868 where he was awarded the high artistic prize by the association of Russian musicians. Apparently, the artistic activity of this musician was quite extensive" writes Prof. Sokoli, (Sokoli R., February 20, 2026).

Harallamb Kristo Koço. Thus, at the end of the 19th century in Russia and precisely, in St. Petersburg, lived and worked a musician and composer of Albanian origin, named Harallamb Kristo Koço. He came from Boboshtica in Korça and, in general, was imbued with Albanian culture, not only with the general social and scientific culture, but, first of all, with the special and original folk culture, which he had received from his family, making it part of his conscience. A student of the St. Petersburg Conservatory, he composed, mainly due to his school obligations, many large and small musical pieces, which were liked by the artistic environment of that time. However, what may stand out most when one carefully consults his scores are the collections with numerous and different pieces, which, in addition to the musical and compositional education they bring as a result, also underline his national sensitivity and patriotic inspiration: Important to be considered in this context are a collection with "Motives and Songs", or even the piece "Patriotic Motives" and "Albanian March", inspired by the patriotic spirit of the era when Kristo Koço lived.

Palok Kurti. The successor of Giovanni Cannale in directing the first Albanian musical band, a pioneer of the movement for the creation of the Albanian school of cultivated music, a great Shkodran "Master" of music in the period of the Renaissance, the League of Prizren and Independence. Palok Kurti is known by the Shkodran and Albanian public, in addition to being a band leader, also as a composer, orchestrator and arranger. Its role in the civic song, which for the first time takes the form of a civic romance, is decisive. Accompanied by the pianoforte and sung by famous lyric singers of the time, for the history of Albanian music, this is one of the phenomena that defined the "beginning" or "where cultivated Albanian music originated". From this perspective, he remains a great reformer, as he brought the civic mood to the level of civic romances that sound just as successful and fresh today. Here are some of them: "Marshallah to your beauty", "You know, you know", "For me there were fortunes", "Karajfil të zgiodha", "Kur të të drita me dalë", "Të due, moj të due", "Kajfili i kuq si baqju" etc. Palok Kurti has another defining role in the history of Albanian music: that of composing a march for wind entitled "The Unity of Albania", written in Shkodër in 1880 and dedicated to the League of Prizren, which is considered the first creation of cultivated Albanian music (see the introduction of the paper). Under the influence of European formats of cultivated music, he elaborated and composed instrumental and orchestral pieces as well as liturgical music, such as: "Mesha për Shna'Ndoun", "Litani", etc.
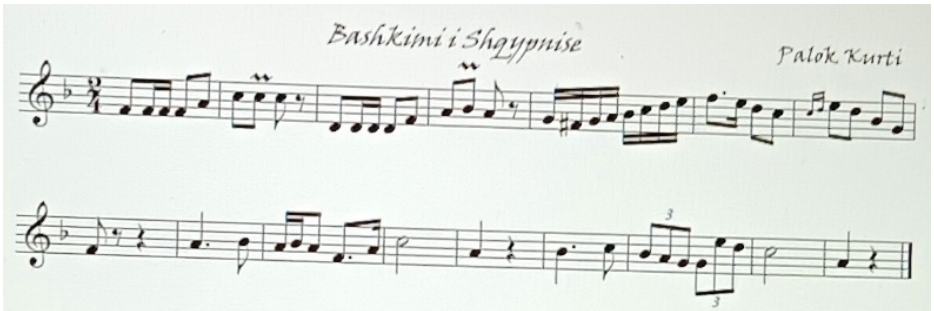


Figure 4. Palok Kurti, wind band marsh "The Albania Union" (manuscript)

Father Martin Gjoka. Father Martin Gjoka was among the first Shkodran composers, who, together with several other musicians, laid the foundations of the new musical culture in Shkodër, that of the birth of professional Albanian music, and consequently, in all of the backward Albania of that period. Born in the Albanian city of Tivar, today Montenegro, he studied at the Franciscan College of Shkodër, to complete his higher studies in theology in Salzburg, Austria. Encouraged also by an early affinity and by the love and passion he had for music in its entirety, he also took lessons in

professional music in Austria from an Austrian professor, named Hartman. In 1912, Martin Gjoka returned to his homeland as a personality complete with multiple lessons and chose to pursue the profession of educator. Thus, at first at the Franciscan high school and then at the Franciscan college "Ilirikum", he gave profiled lessons, from which many personalities of art and music emerged. After Father Martini had also established the girls' choir at the "Stigmatine Sisters" high school in 1914 and after, in 1922, he created the orchestra and then the choir of the Church of the Friars, he also began to write religious and secular music, following the examples of classical and romantic composers. He will be considered especially as a distinguished collector and researcher of folklore, but also as a dedicated composer who, even many years later, inspired and worked with passion to bring out many musicians and composers prepared with love and passion from him. He died in Shkodra, in 1940, after having composed many important works of various musical forms and genres, from vocal and instrumental miniatures, symphonies and romances to large vocal and stage works. Among the most notable compositions that have reached us, from the creativity of At Martin, it is worth mentioning the piano miniatures with the titles: "Freedom", "Homeland and Albanian language", march for harmonium, album for harmonium with 24 parts, notebook with preludes for pianoforte with four voices, chorale "O those who gave life", Rhapsody "on Albanian folk songs and motifs", musical comedy "Long live uncle Frano's wallet", melodrama "Pata", opera "Judas Maccabees", with libretto by Gjergj Fishta, symphony in two movements "Two flowers on the grave of Skanderbeg" as well as several other dramatic, vocal and symphonic works.

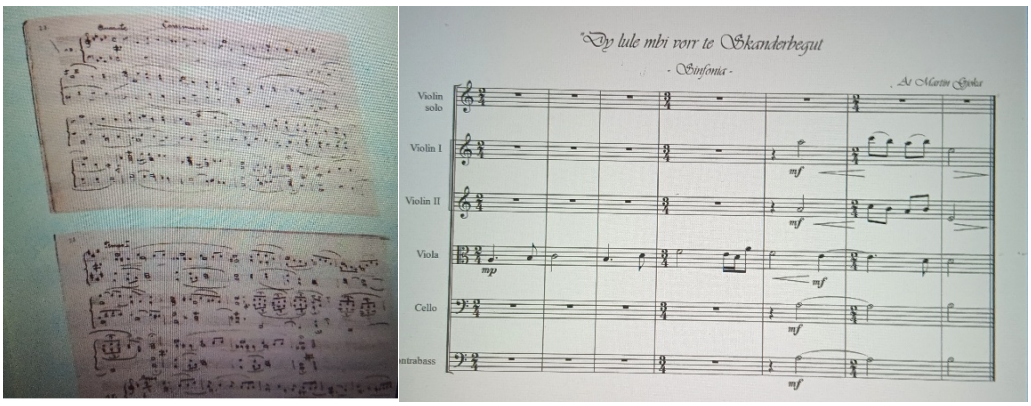


Figure 5. Martin Gjoka "Harmonium" and the Symphony "Two flowers on Skanderbeg's grave" (manuscripts)

From Martin Gjoka's work, it is thought that some of the scores have been lost, however, most of them have remained and have served as a gateway for professional Albanian music and for its subsequent undisputed influences, for their national and popular character and spirit. Thus, while the harmonium album, for example, was written simply, for the purposes of liturgical use, another work, the symphony "Two Flowers on the Tomb of Skanderbeg" is in keeping with Albanian patriotism, as an ideal of the time in which the author lived. "Martin Gjoka's music is imbued with the most characteristic elements of regional folklore; it is a rational music with an epic-heroic and epic-lyrical character. Inspired by the poems of Prenush, Fishta, Mjeda and Shiroka, he wrote a series of songs, romances, ballads and choral pieces that called for the unity of Albanians" (Kalemi S., 2003 p. 25). However, despite the great efforts of Martin Gjoka and other Shkodra musicians and clergy to prepare young musicians, the general level of Shkodra's creative and performing forces at that time had only just begun to take the first steps towards professionalism. This professionalism was not always understood and practiced to the appropriate and necessary degrees. However, even in this general framework we can affirm that Martin Gjoka, besides being an intellectual with clear convictions, fully formed and at the same time, with a broad and complex education, although a devout cleric, was also a cultured and realistic musician for his own and others' values. He used the Albanian language in his vocal and choral works instead of the Latin one. Martin Gjoka was aware of the stages of his education, but also of the level that the Albanian culture of that time had reached and through this he tried to use his knowledge to educate entire generations of young musicians, who, later, would be formed as undisputed masters of their profession.

Dom Mikel Koliqi. Born in Shkodra and educated in Italy, ordained a priest, he returned to his homeland and, although self-taught, in acquiring musical knowledge, he contributed as a choir director and composer. He wrote mainly works

dedicated to vocals, a trilogy of melodramas "Rozafa", "The Siege of Shkodra" and "Ruba e Kuqe" and other works of vocal genres but which have unfortunately been lost. He had a great influence on future composers such as Tonin Harapi, the pianist accompanying his choir "Scholae Cantorum", Prenkë Jakova etc.

Frano Ndoja. A contemporary of Palok Kurti, his activity extends to the same sector: that of establishing and directing brass orchestras, arrangements and compositions for them. A skilled orchestrator and arranger, he had the great merit of passing the Shkodra civic romances from the party into the written and arranged score for the brass orchestras he directed, ensuring that civic songs were heard by the people in well-arranged orchestral variants.

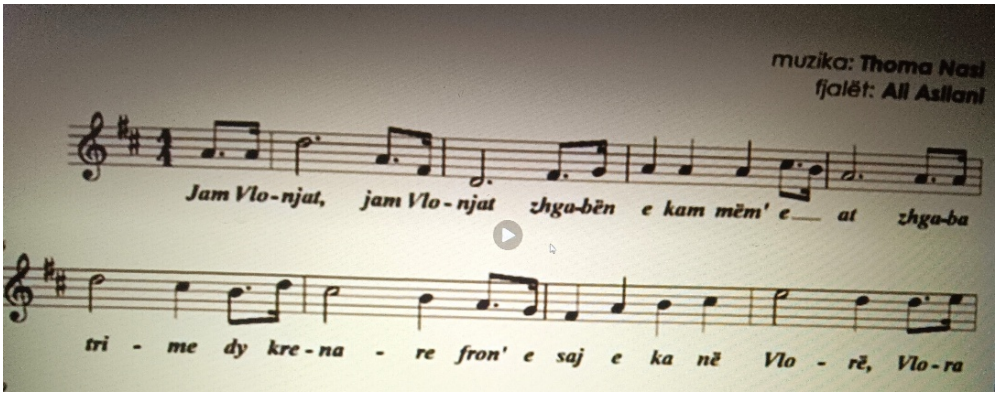


Figure 6. Thoma Nasi, the patriotic song "Vlora-Vlora" (manuscript)

Thoma Nasi. Born in Dardha, Korça, a conductor, composer and patriot close to the Albanian diaspora in Boston, America, like Fan Noli, studied flute and composition at the "New England" Conservatory in Boston. His main merit is the founding of the famous Albanian-American musical band "Vatra", the great activity that this band had in the bosom of the Albanian diaspora and especially its patriotic and emotional role in the defense of Vlora in 1920, for all the composers who write the patriotic song Vlora-Vlora. He has written in the Albanian language, lyrical and patriotic songs as well as various instrumental miniatures for violin, flute and pianoforte such as: "The Shepherd's Flute", "The Nightingale", "The Cry", "Four Albanian Dances" etc.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we tried to argue and prove that, starting from the end of the 19th century, with the great historical event of the League of Prizren and its social impact, continuing at the beginning of the 20th century with the declaration of the Independence of Albania, Albanian culture would take on a different appearance, completely different from the past. It would witness, not only important contributions – Kristo Koço, Kastrioti, Nasi or Lec Kurti – or very important ones – Fan S. Noli – from authors who had organized their lives abroad, but above all extremely important contributions, for a certain direction, from musicians and composers who, with their culture and the opportunity created by their studies at prestigious European schools, put them at the service of the national cause. The latter returned to their country willingly and worked with passion, creating and composing with the quality of true professionals within the borders of Albania, and adapting to the various conditions offered by foreign invaders, different circumstances and regimes in power. All together, therefore, they did nothing but fulfill their sacred obligation, gave the nation the first premises, successfully completed the first journey, showed the source from which the Albanian school of professional music would begin, or in other words, the Albanian school of cultivated music.

The most direct link between the works examined in this study and Kosovo is Palok Kurti's wind-band march The Union of Albania. Composed in Shkodër in 1880, the march was dedicated to the League of Prizren and is regarded as an early landmark of Albanian art music (Tole, 2004, p. 34). Its dedication shows how a political movement centred in Prizren found expression in an early work of the Albanian concert repertoire. The march thus offers a concrete example for research on the place of Prizren and the League of Prizren in Kosovo's musical and cultural memory.

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