

An Introduction to Georgian Art Music

An Introduction to Georgian Art Music:

Sense-Making through Music

By

Nana Sharikadze

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



An Introduction to Georgian Art Music: Sense-Making through Music

By Nana Sharikadze

This book first published 2023

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2023 by Nana Sharikadze

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-5275-2874-X

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-2874-1

*This book is dedicated to
my mother Lali (Meri) Paichadze,
my best friend, who is the most tender-hearted
and responsive person in my life.*

"*Every wall is a door*" – Ralph Waldo Emerson

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Illustrations.....	ix
Preface.....	xi
Acknowledgments.....	xvii
List of Abbreviations or Chronology	xxi
Chapter I.....	1
1,028 Days of Georgian Art Music During Independence	
1. <i>The Concepts of “National” and Georgian Art Music</i>	
- <i>Modernism or Romanticism</i>	
- <i>The Musical “We”</i>	
- <i>Word-oriented Genres and Theater</i>	
2. <i>The Founders of Georgian Art Music</i>	
- <i>Zakaria Paliashvili</i>	
- <i>Viktor Dolidze</i>	
- <i>Niko Sulkhaniashvili</i>	
- <i>Farewell to Independence</i>	
Chapter II.....	49
1921-1953: The Mortification of Muses	
1. <i>From National Identity to Soviet Identity</i>	
- <i>“Fathers” and “Sons”</i>	
2. <i>An Anatomy of Control in Art Music</i>	
- <i>Demonstrative Punishments</i>	
- The punishment of Andria Balanchivadze – Case #1	

- The punishment of Vano Muradeli – Case #2
- The punishment of Grigol Kiladze – Case #3

Chapter III	93
-------------------	----

Questioning the Soviet Mainstream

- *From Soviet Mainstream to No Mainstream*
- Unofficial Music
- The Warsaw Autumn Festival as a Contact Zone for
Composers beyond the Iron Curtain

References.....	151
-----------------	-----

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Map of Georgia;
2. Act of Independence of Georgia, May 26, 1918 (preserved in the Collection of the National Archive of Georgia);
3. Zakaria Paliashvili (from the Konservatoriis shromaTa krebuli; Publishing series of Tbilisi State Conservatoire);
4. Viktor Dolidze (from the Publishing Series from different years of Tbilisi State Conservatoire);
5. Niko Sulkhaniashvili (From the Publishing Series from different years of Tbilisi State Conservatoire);
6. The Red Army in Tbilisi, February 25, 1921 (from the Collection of the National Parliamentary Library of Georgia, Digital Library “Ivereli”);
7. The Caricature of Demonstrative Punishment in the Conservatoire Recital Hall – Two-time Stalin Prize Laureate, Composer Andria Balanchivadze and Music Critic Lado Donadze are charged with Cosmopolitanism, 1948 (from the Publishing Series from different years of Tbilisi State Conservatoire);
8. Brothers – George Balanchine and Andria Balanchivadze (the 1960s) (from the Publishing Series from different years of Tbilisi State Conservatoire);

9. “Act of Reestablishment of Independence on 9 April, 1991”
(preserved in Ekvtime Takaishvili Museum of Georgian
Parliamentarism, Parliament of Georgia);
10. From left: Giya Kancheli, Nodar Gabunia, Jansug Kakhidze, Bidzina
Kvernadze (from the Publishing Series from different years of Tbilisi
State Conservatoire);
11. Nodar Gabunia (from the Publishing Series from different years of
Tbilisi State Conservatoire);
12. Sul Khan Nasidze (from the Publishing Series from different years of
Tbilisi State Conservatoire);
13. Natela Svanidze (from the Publishing Series from different years of
Tbilisi State Conservatoire);
14. Mikheil Shugliashvili (from the Publishing Series from different
years of Tbilisi State Conservatoire).

PREFACE

Peter Schmelz, Professor of Musicology, School of Music, Dance and Theatre, Arizona State University, Editor, Russian Music Studies, Indiana University Press

“Nana Sharikadze’s study of Georgian art music fills a large gap in studies of Soviet and post-Soviet space. The first book of its kind in English, it presents an accessible introduction to a crucial region of the world and an important repertoire that deserves to be better known.”

Marina Kavtaradze, Dr. Prof. Head of the Music History Chair at the Tbilisi State Conservatoire

Nana Sharikadze's “A brief introduction to Georgian art music: sense-making through music” is the first English-language book to deal with the actual issues regarding the history of 20th-century Georgian music from the first Democratic Republic of Georgia and the establishment of the Soviet cultural policy to the present day. Accordingly, the cultural-aesthetic problems that Georgian music faced in the changing political and ideological environment are shown from an axiological perspective, thereby demonstrating the special importance of this monograph.

The journey described in the book covers the entire century, starting with the 1,028 days of the independence of Georgian art music (1918–1921), establishing its “national” concept and musical identity. It is shown how much work the first generation of Georgian composers did to lay a solid foundation for the further development of art music. Unfortunately, ideas and concepts that had the potential for further growth were developed in a different way or completely stopped due to some historical turbulence. The return to the ideas established by Zakaria Paliashvili and the composers of the first generation took time. It was a time when the Russian occupation took 70 years away from Georgian culture, imposed strict control mechanisms, and defined the Soviet mainstream.

The monograph clearly shows that the loss of independence and transition toward the Soviet identity affected not only the idea, but also the language and aesthetics, which in fact aimed to create a parallel musical reality different from the West. It would have been free from the influences of experiments, modernism, and the avant-garde. The history of the coexistence of different generations of composers and their stylistic variety in the Soviet reality, as well as the phenomenon of “unofficial music” in that reality, and the role of the Warsaw Autumn Festival as a “Contact Zone” for countries beyond the Iron Curtain, including Georgian composers, are presented in an interesting manner. These different cultural and political contexts of the 20th century had an interpenetrating effect on Georgian music; cultural processes were

intersected by Soviet and post-Soviet socio-political events, and in contrast to them, it can be seen how the musical culture itself responded to these processes.

I am convinced that the book will be of interest not only to musicians but also to a broader audience, because the history of Georgian music told in this book, with the severity of the problems posed and the distinguished accessibility of its narrative style, will undoubtedly be attractive to a wide circle of beneficiaries.

Gvantsa Gvinjilia, Assoc. Prof. Music History Chair of Tbilisi State Conservatoire

This work, “A brief introduction to Georgian art music: sense-making through music” by musicologist Nana Sharikadze, tells the story of a country that has constantly had to protect various symbols of its identity, including traditional music, and defend against the invasions of various enemies over the last four centuries, including Russian annexation.

The merit of the work is to present an updated look at the history of Georgian art music from various perspectives. This work aims to position Georgian music on the world musical map because historical times and geopolitical changes have accelerated the need for Georgian music to be understood as an organic part of European culture within the context of world musical processes. This book has tremendous value in that it is a

correct reflection of the Soviet experience in terms of understanding Georgian music from the standpoint of European values.

Since musical processes are discussed in the context of modern geopolitical reality and European values, it is natural that the historical process of Georgian art music development, the main trends, and the creative role of individual composers throughout the history of Georgian music and culture, in general, be presented from completely new perspectives.

First up is the origin and initial stages of the composition school, which is discussed in the context of the era of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, an era that has entered history as a period of national renaissance and cultural upheaval, a period of the close convergence of Georgian art with European culture. For the first time in Georgian musicology, Nana Sharikadze explores the relationship between Georgian musical figures of the 1910–20s, forgotten during the Soviet period, and modernism.

The music of Soviet Georgia, the first period of which is marked by the 1920s and 1950s, is discussed in the context of Soviet censorship, when the careful observance of Soviet censorship instructions made Georgian music lose its compositional individualism and derailed the classic forms established by Georgian musicians.

In the music of the next stage (1960s–80s), the trends that questioned the Soviet mainstream and led to the emergence of “unofficial music” are outlined by the author. The author discusses the very interesting and painful process of the assimilation of modern European music trends and new techniques. Nana Sharikadze is the first Georgian musicologist to discuss the role of the Warsaw Autumn Festival as a “contact zone” for the evolution of musical processes in Georgia, a country beyond the Iron Curtain, thereby opening prospects for further research on this issue.

The transitional era of Georgian music from the Soviet past to the path of European integration (the 1990s) is also discussed. That is the period when Georgian music had a chance to position itself on the world music map already as the music of an independent country and show what models it had chosen to preserve its national identity, the continuity of a tradition in terms of being adapted to the global space.

Despite many letters, several books, and monographs about Georgian music having been written by Georgian musicologists in Georgian and foreign languages, until now there has been no English-language book about Georgian art music. This amazingly addictive book and introduction is intended for all readers interested in Georgian music.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The idea of writing a book about Georgian art music in English was initiated by Lech Konczak, the director of the Polish Institute in Tbilisi. I took advantage of this idea because information about the 100-year history of Georgian art music, in English, has not been available for a broad audience so far.

L. Konczak not only proposed the idea to work on the book but also made it possible for me to visit the Warsaw Autumn Festival (WAF) and examine its archives (1956–1991) several times in 2018–2019. He was also the key person to put me in touch with the musicological department of the Institute of Art at the Polish Academy of Science (ISPAN) as well as the Polish Music Information Center POLMIC (Polskie Centrum Informacji Muzycznej) of the Polish Composers' Union (ZKP) in 2019. I am sincerely grateful to the Polish Institute in Tbilisi and personally to L. Konczak for his invaluable help and support. This cooperation is reflected in the section dedicated to the WAF in the third chapter of this book. However, this is just a small part of those findings; more details about the importance of the WAF for countries within the Iron Curtain are yet to come.

I would like to express my gratitude toward people who supported me during my work on this book: first, the reviewers of the book, Dr. Marina Kavtaradze and Dr. Gvantsa Gvinjilia, who read various versions of the script several times and shared critical comments and notes, and thus rendered a great service during my work with their valuable comments. If not for their dedication and readiness to make it in time, the book would have taken much longer to finalize.

I cannot be grateful enough to Ketevan Bakradze, who, during a tragic circumstance in her life, supported and assisted me with critical reflection and who was kind enough to share the photo materials needed for the book. I am endlessly thankful to Dr. Marika Nadareishvili for volunteering the information about Natela Svanidze.

I would like to extend my gratitude to Dr. Peter Schmelz for his constant support, and his time dedicated to reading the script and responding with important feedback, to say nothing about his invaluable help with English. A few years ago, his article on unofficial music was an inspiration for me to start examining the problem of unofficial music in Georgian art music.

My sincere thanks go to Maia Sigua who kindly put me in touch with Cambridge Scholars Publishing and positively encouraged me to go for it.

I was fortunate enough to benefit from the help of David Shugliashvili (a Georgian ethnomusicologist and son of Mikheil Shugliashvili) as well as Giorgi Rukhadze (grandson of Natela Svanidze) and Goga Shaverzashvili (the head of the National Georgian Composers' Union). The text would have sounded differently if not for the involvement of Eirik K. Halvorson and professionalism of Audrey Anderson, the main proof reader.

I would like to personally thank Dr. Beata Bolesławska-Lewandowska from the Institute of Art at the Polish Academy of Science (ISPAN) for the materials and consultations regarding the WAF. Special thanks go to Dr. Pawel Gancarczyk, Associate Professor in the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and Head of the Department of Musicology, for his constant support.

My sincere gratitude goes to the staff of the archives and libraries as well: POLMIC, Library of the Polish Composers' Union, Izabela Zymer (Assistant Director), Wiktoria Antonczyk and Agnieszka Cieślak who were always helpful and made my work at the WAF's archive comfortable. Special thanks to the National Archive of Georgia for providing the necessary photo materials for the book.

Saying thanks to Nini Kutelia means to say nothing, since her help and support during my work on the book were indispensable. The work would have taken longer if not for her help.

And last but not least, sincere gratitude to all the people who directly or indirectly supported me during my work on the manuscript. I am grateful to all of those with whom I have had the pleasure to work.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS OR CHRONOLOGY

WAF – Warsaw Autumn Festival

TSC – Tbilisi State Conservatoire

DGR – Democratic Republic of Georgia

WW2 – World War Two



Map of Georgia

CHAPTER I

1,028 DAYS OF GEORGIAN ART MUSIC DURING INDEPENDENCE

Georgian independence was declared during an ‘historical vortex’ on May 26, 1918. The expression ‘historical vortex’ was not used by accident¹; it was not an exaggeration. Rather, it reflected the entirety of the turbulence experienced by the country from Czarist Russia until the first Democratic Republic of Georgia. The ‘collapse’ of the Russian Empire, the Russian Revolution of 1917, and World War I served as catalysts for the independence of Georgia. Yet independence lasted only three years, a total of 1,028 days, and left a significant mark on the country’s history in many ways. It introduced room for future great expectations and the challenging decisions reflecting the extremely dynamic political,² educational, and cultural life. Contrasting ideas in politics were represented by the “Mensheviks, Bolsheviks, social

¹ The article “Georgian Independence has Been Determined” was published in the newspaper *Sakartvelo* (Georgia) issued on May 26, 1918, N101.

² The following progressive ideas were introduced, such as women’s guaranteed right to participate in the elections, antidiscrimination laws for ethnic and religious minorities, and other initiated reforms; a multi-party government system was adopted and an environment for open debates with the participation of various political parties was created.

revolutionists, conservatives, anarchists, liberals, and democrats: all of them were struggling to win the hearts and minds of Georgians.”³ A lot had been achieved in the field of education: Tbilisi State Conservatoire was founded one year prior to the declaration of independence in 1917, followed by Tbilisi State University in 1918. Apart from that, writers, poets, artists, and musicians representing various styles and trends – Romanticism and Modernism (Futurism, Dadaism, Symbolism) – strove to celebrate the impossible independence in “the fantastic city – Tbilisi.”⁴ “The world, indeed, was going to collapse and Tbilisi seemed to be the only city reflecting it with a poetic intonation” (Robakidze, 1988, 237–238).

The complex polyphonic texture of Georgian music had an indispensable role in this. When the country gained independence, the birth of Georgian art music coincided with this period. The Georgian composers (Zakaria Paliashvili, Meliton Balanchivadze, Dimitri Arakishvili, Niko Sulkhaniashvili, Viktor Dolidze, Tamar

³ More information about the mentioned period might be found in the “Window on Freedom: Introducing Georgia’s First Democratic Republic of 1918–1921” a short documentary (film) made by the Writers House of Georgia (2021) in the framework of Georgian online literature Festival “Georgia's Fantastic Tavern - Where Europe Meets Asia”

⁴ Grigol Robakidze used this expression in his unfinished novel *Falestra*. In Georgian: “ქვეყანა მართლაც იქცეოდა – და მხოლოდ ტფილისი იყო ერთადერთი ქალაქი, რომელიც ამ „ქცევას“ პოეტური მღერით ხვდებოდა”.

Vakhvakhishvili)⁵ formed the so-called first generation of classical composers who developed a firm foundation for the establishment of the Georgian art music school. While these composers were living and active, they were accompanied by the historical upheavals leading from czarism to an independent Georgia (1918–1921) and the country's occupation by Russia in 1921.

⁵ Meliton Balanchivadze (1862-1937); Zakaria Paliashvili (1871-1933); Niko Sul Khanishvili (1871-1919); Dimitri Arakishvili (1873-1953); Viktor Dolidze (1890-1933), Tamar Vakhvakhishvili (1893-1976).

1. The Concepts of “National” and Georgian Art Music Modernism or Romanticism

Several terms have been used to identify the national origins of art music throughout the decades: “the Soviet Georgian compositional school,” “the Georgian national composition school,” and the “new Georgian professional compositional school.”

The term “Soviet Georgian compositional school” was created during the occupation by the Soviet musicology and was used to identify that the nation residing within the borders of the USSR belonged to a certain ideological and aesthetical category as pertaining to music. This term was used throughout the entire Soviet period, and it applied to the music created in the Soviet republic of Georgia. The term “new Georgian professional compositional school” was introduced in the post-Thaw era by Lado Donadze⁶ and indicated a stage of development from old professional (ecclesiastical music, already banned by the Soviets) music toward the new art music. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the word “Soviet” was replaced by the word “national” which identified values and aspirations of national origin and roots. Hereinafter, I will avoid using a combination of “national Georgian” and “compositional school,”⁷ instead **Georgian art music** will be introduced.

⁶ Lado Donadze (1905–1986) – Musicologist, head of the music history department at Tbilisi State Conservatoire.

⁷ School also seems problematic, since in Georgian reality it mainly indicates the togetherness of composers of a certain national origin, rather than those sharing a certain style, aesthetic, language, technique, etc.

The challenges caused by the historical turbulence affected individual perceptions of the world through music, its principles, aesthetics, and values. However, it also defined the first and foremost task as to what would probably become an equivalent to the awareness of a “national idea and identity” in art music.⁸ That was the driving force behind the formation of art music when discussing how important the first generation of composers was for a nation striving to gain independence and be introduced through art music as well.

The mainstream of Georgian culture in the late 1910s and early 1920s identified with modernism, which in its turn was quite a complex movement inspired by a social dilemma rooted in the need for artistic self-differentiation (Tabatadze, 2014, 308) and which mainly revealed itself through literature, art, theater, dance, and poetry (T. Tabidze, G. Robakidze, L. Gudiashvili, D. Kakabadze, J. Nikoladze, P. Iashvili, I. Zdanevich, and others). Georgian modernism “looked quite eclectic [...] writers, artists, poets were inspired by European trends while using only that which they considered helpful in enriching Georgian art [...]” (Avaliani, 2016, 60). In the meantime, it strived to stay in direct dialogue

⁸ The problem of identity has become one of the most sensitive subjects in the study of contemporary Georgian art; Georgian musicologists have constantly been interested in the musical identity – mainly a consideration of the role of national roots (L. Donadze, G. Orjonikidze, A. Tsulukidze, L. Gogua, R. Tsurtsunia, M. Kavtaradze, N. Sharikadze, R. Kutateladze, M. Kordzaia, M. Iashvili, T. Tsulukidze, M. Ghvtisiashvili, G. Ghvinjilia, M. Sigua and others). During the Soviet times nearly all Georgian musicologists have examined the different forms of “national language” in art music.

with European counterparts to “align Georgian culture on a European axis”⁹. However, Georgian art music was in a different reality if compared to the local art as well as to European musical developments. Apparently, modernism did not seem to have any relevance for art music endeavors and the challenges they faced. In comparison to the art of the 1910s–20s, music was unaffected by modernism. Unlike artists, the first generation of composers – M. Balanchivadze, Z. Paliashvili, V. Dolidze, N. Sulkhaniashvili and D. Arakishvili – were not involved in, nor inspired by, the modernistic movement at all. Moreover, due to various reasons, they were not even a part of Tbilisi’s bohemian scene of the 1910s–20s. However, an examination of the reasons and consequences is still forthcoming.

Modernism was an “imported good” introduced into the arts by different members of the artistic and poetic society: a) Georgians who were educated in Europe and returned to their home country, b) Russian emigrants (those who escaped World War I as well as the October Socialist Revolution) who found shelter in Georgia as well as c) Europeans working and living in the country. Cities like Tbilisi and Kutaisi served as the main contact zones for all the aforementioned groups; the new findings of modernistic art were accumulated in Tbilisi’s artistic café culture (Tabatadze, 2014, 314). Still, the concept of Georgian art music did not meet with T. Tabidze’s idea about “aligning Georgian

⁹ Stated by Titsian Tabidze in 1916 (Kenchoshvili, 2015, 14–25).

culture on a European axis” in terms of synchronizing it with European music developments in general.

Nonetheless, history is not only a sum of the facts and consequences of chronological events, but also about comprehending and explaining why particular processes prevailed at a certain stage. Eventually, modernism did not fit with the demands for national art music. Obviously, different aims and objectives were identified for art music in the late 1910s – the initial stage of its establishment. A starting point was to create some model pieces embodying the national spirit. Therefore, the “social crisis and artistic self-differentiation” (Tabatadze, 2014, 308) (so important for modernism) were not considered to be relevant for those pieces. On the contrary,

“the concept of nationality – in music as in other fields – is not an invariable constant but something which alters in response to historical factors [...] one of the factors in the nineteenth century which influenced the expression of nationality in music was the idea [that] nationalism... not merely created a concept out of existing elements... but that it also intervened in the existing situation and changed it” (Miles, 1985).

In the late 1910s Georgian art music focused on the experience of European

“patriots who saw their political and cultural borders violated and staged a series of rebellions [...] This kind of political feeling came to be known as Nationalism which [...] became a decisive power in the Romantic movement.” (Miles, 1985).