

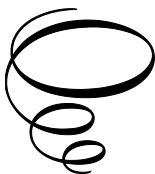
Albanian Identity in History and Traditional Performance

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By

Eno Koço

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*To my parents, Tefla and Kristo,
my wife, Raimonda,
our children, Teuta and Gent,
who, along with their beloved families,
changed my life from a single person
to ten family members*

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PREFACE

BY TEUTA KOÇO PAULIDES

There was a time when speaking Albanian to my brother out in public was akin to speaking a secret language. Not long after our move to England in 1991, we worked out that no one, save our parents, would understand us be it in school or out and about life.

There were just no other Albanians around. The country we had called home for 13 and 10 years respectively, was suddenly something we had to explain from scratch. At my school, if we played ‘where is Albania’ the finger would often land in the Indian Ocean. It slowly dawned on our young minds how shut off, closed, Albania had been from the world. People had heard of the tightly wound Communist regimes of China and Russia, but not of the strict dictatorship of this tiny country in the middle of Europe.

Growing up I often felt relief at having moved away, at living in a ‘fair’ country, where doing the right thing yielded rewards. I went to a music boarding school and on my visits home, was often surprised by the intensity with which my father would be working on Albanian matters, his PhD initially, then essays, lectures and book publishing both in English and Albanian. I wondered where the drive came from to bring to light the *Albanian Urban Lyric Song in the 1930s* and the *Vocal Iso(n)* of south-west Balkan and Byzantine chant traditions amongst other themes.

This latest book is a collection of individual essays and articles under Albanian musical themes. It starts with an essay on Scanderbeg, the musical interest on whom goes back to the 18th century. I find it incredible that well-known composers such as Vivaldi chose to write a whole opera on this Albanian hero. Scanderbeg to me was the dominating monument on the main square of Tirana, the imposing image of a warrior on a horse, impressive to my young eyes. During the years I would be passing this monument daily, I knew very little, if nothing about other countries, other cultures and ways of life. That one day I should discover that many others, throughout the years and from other countries had also shown interest on this imposing man’s life, I think bears testament to what must have been the power of this Albanian’s personality.

The next essay has Fan S. Noli as its subject. I first heard Noli's name during this incredible new experience called a church service. Somewhere, in the periphery of my mind I was aware that my father was working hard to make this service happen. From the totally atheist upbringing in the Communist Albania I knew, a church and what happened in it during a service seemed totally alien. Of course, I did later understand that religion had existed a long time before Communism and many of a certain generation even remembered it. I grasped that there were different branches of Christianity and that a gifted scholar named Fan Noli had founded the Orthodox Church of Albania. I could only wonder at the mammoth task this must have been, when, being as small a country as Albania is, it could have easily joined the Greek or Russian Orthodox branch. The essay goes into detail about Noli's publications, his translations and his linguistic gifts. I to this day remain simply inspired by the unwavering commitment Noli displayed to Albania and the Albanian language, throughout his life.

'Shostakovich, Kadare and the Nature of Dissidence' speaks of the Communist totalitarian system I and all my generation experienced as children. We were spared the worst I think by not having to live our adult lives in it. I do however have memories of whispers, unsaid words and fake conversations amongst adults. Like heavy fog weighing down on everyone never quite lifting. How did these artists survive and succeed in creating in that atmosphere, for so long? The essay explores the constraints of the system and the complicated relationship between said system and Shostakovich and Kadare. I imagine everyone has their own view on these complicated set-ups. I can only admire the internal strength of both of these human beings, where mere mortals might have collapsed in a heap of anxiety.

Three essays follow on Samuel Baud-Bovy, Kosta Manojlović and Thoma Nassi. All three men dedicated their working lives to music and in particular that of the Balkan region. Again, I find I am moved that a non-Albanian composer such as Kosta Manojlović should have harmonised, arranged and published Albanian choral songs. Thoma Nassi who was Albanian arrived in Albania in the 1920 together with his band, from America. His aim – to enrich Albania's musical activities, namely in Korça. Despite this gigantic effort, he was not regarded favourably in the post war regime, and his works were not performed.

The second section of the book deals with Traditional Performance, themes like the 'Vocal Iso', 'Reflections of Albanian Urban Lyric Song in the 1930s' and 'The Saze'. The essays attempt to determine the historical roots of the vocal iso as well studying the Saze more in depth. Both these

traditions are and have been common place in Albanian music. The Urban Lyric Song refers to a particular branch of music which began in the first half of the 20th century and is still present now. I myself have often sung Albanian urban lyric songs throughout my studies at the Royal Northern College of Music as well as beyond in concert performances. Their uniqueness makes them attractive and fun in a repertoire of classical music. They have always been a favourite with my non-Albanian repeteurs.

The third section of the book deals with my father's musical family. Having lost both his parents at an early age, he has throughout his life found comfort in talking to their friends and colleagues, thirsty for all details of that period in time and feeling closer to his own parents. My grandparents' memory was kept alive by their sound in the old Columbia gramophone records of songs made in Milan in 1937. Initially these recordings only had my grandmother's voice on them, the much-loved Tefta Tashko Koço, but from 1942 onwards their number increased substantially and two urban traditional songs from Korçë sung by my grandfather, Kristo Koço, were also included.

In spite of its size, turbulent past and restrictive regimes, Albania seems to have consistently produced strong characters and learned artists. This book deals with but a few that my father has chosen to highlight for their work with Albanian themes. Contrary to my teenage observations, people have demonstrated an interest in Albanian music, art and literature for centuries. Perhaps the bigger question is where did their unfaltering commitment stem from? Why did Thoma Nassi choose to bring his music back to Albania and Fan Noli dedicate his life to publishing books on Albanian history and literature from America? Is Albania's unstable history in fact responsible for churning out such great thinkers throughout the ages? Like us, Albanians continue to attempt living elsewhere. However, thirty years after our arrival in the UK, he continues to dedicate his life to the Albanian musical cause, as do many other Albanians in their fields. It is both awe-inspiring and humbling to realise that this tiny, often chaotic country inspires such whole hearted involvement from its artists and intellectuals

April, 2021

HISTORICAL INDIVIDUALITIES

SCANDERBEG IN MUSIC

Scanderbeg as seen by historians and other writers

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



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.

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).'¹

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 an 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 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.² 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 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*.³ These two operas, as well as Lacépède's *Scanderbeg* can be found in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 1980, vol. 20 (S. Sadie (ed.)). More about these 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.

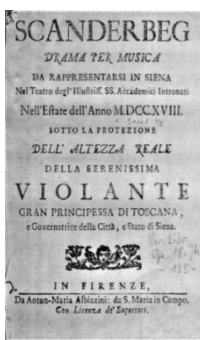
Antonio Vivaldi—*Scanderbeg*

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.

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

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 who 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 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 *false* 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.

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

François Rebel (1701–1775) and François Francœur (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 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 Lérès. 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



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 of 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.

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 & Fracoeur'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.

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 / Régnez 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).

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 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-Ilion 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 *Académie 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

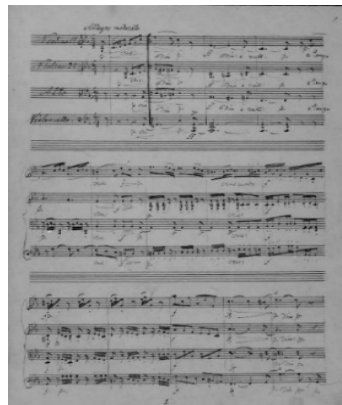
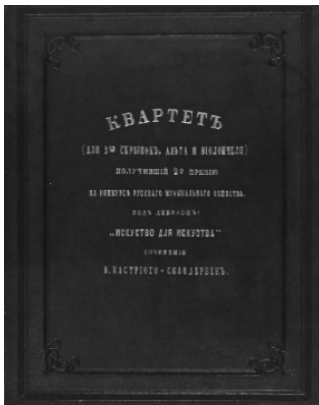
Looking East, in Imperial Russia of the 19th century, a musician with a special name— Vladimir Georg(evich) Kastrioto-Skanderbek (1820–1879), made his mark in music composition in this country.

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—М.: 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 and 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.



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



РУССКАЯ СТАРИНА

ЕЖЕМЕСЯЧНОЕ

ИСТОРИЧЕСКОЕ ИЗДАНИЕ

СНОВАНИЕ 1-го января 1870 г.

1895 г.

ПЕЧАТЬ.

ДВАДЦАТЬ ШЕСТОЙ ГОДА ИЗДАНИЯ.

ТОМЪ ВОСЕМЬДЕСЯТЫ ТРЕТІЙ.

С.-ПЕТЕРБУРГЪ.

Типографія Русскаго старина, «Историческое Издание», Нев. Проспект., № 10.
1895.

Издателемъ "Русскаго"

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).



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 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. Harlampy'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 Harlampy 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 Romanian poet and playwright, who was originally from Boboshtitsa, characterises this dialect as 'Slavic with the intonation of spoken Latin'.

The information on Harlampy 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.